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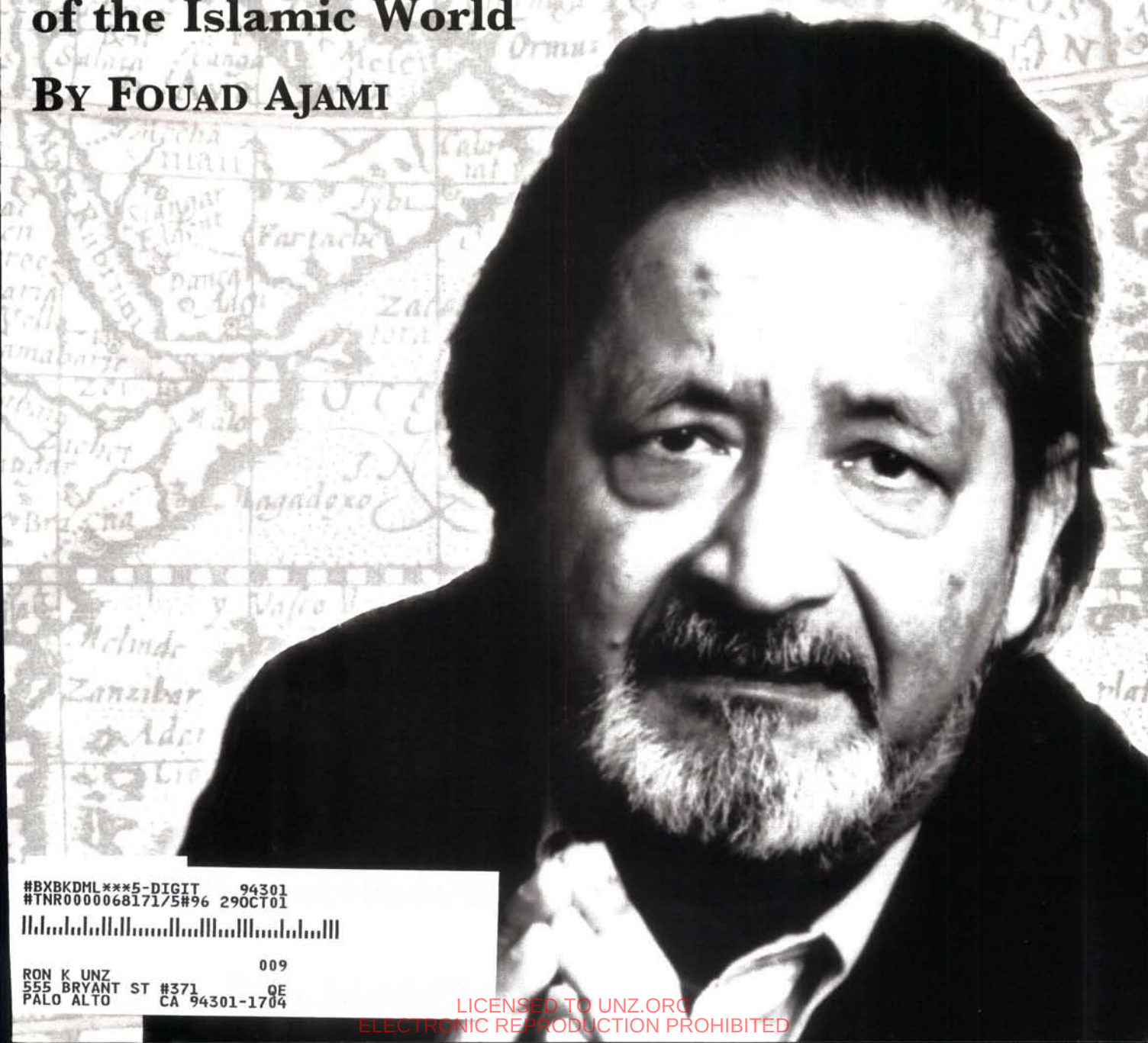
BY FOUAD AJAMI



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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JULY 13, 1998

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CORRESPONDENCE

Faithful readers

To the editors:
James Wood ("Twister," June 8) correctly identifies the irreducible difficulty of affirming a God who in some way observes but does not intervene when natural or human disaster afflicts the innocent.

However, his conclusion (there is, therefore, no God) does not follow. Only if we insist that God be conceived of as being with personality (with the coordinate problems that Wood notes) might we need to conclude that there is no God. But, if we conceive of God as, for example, a power or force within creation which makes for justice, freedom, kindness, and courage, and, if we identify this God as real in the same way that forces such as gravity or love are real, we can say that there is indeed a God. And, when we act for justice, when we bring freedom, when we show kindness, and when we display courage, then we can be said to believe in God.

RABBI RICHARD HIRSH
Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation
Evanston, Illinois

To the editors:
The God we read about in the Bible is both the creator of all and the one who suffers with the people of Israel and who hung on a cross in solidarity with humankind. This is not a solution of the problem of evil, but it is a redefinition of what "goodness" and "power" might mean and an explosion of any attempt to make theodicy an abstract philosophical problem that awaits an ingenious metaphysical answer.

DAVID HEIM
Managing Editor
The Christian Century
Chicago, Illinois

To the editors:
I am struck at James Wood's criticism of Augustine's belief that free will is necessary for a moral world. Following Pierre Bayle, Wood asks, "why would God bestow a gift [free will] that he knows in advance will be abused in such a manner that it will *only* serve to bring about the ruin of the person to whom it is given?" (Emphasis added.) What is he talking about? Isn't it his experience, as it is mine, that by and large the majority of people we know exercise their free will, again and again, day after day, to do what is expected of them? The world with free will is not, as Wood says, "full of pain." It is full of countless small and large acts of free will that bring satisfaction if not joy to the doer and receiver.

It is only in this context that the painful injustices we also see occurring stand out so sharply. God gave us free will because it was the only way to create at least the hope for a moral order. If there is no God, then there can be no such thing as a righteous person, for a Hitler can claim as much moral legitimacy as can a Jew.

RABBI JONATHAN H. GERARD
Temple Covenant of Peace
Easton, Pennsylvania

To the editors:
A utopian prison could never be, as James Wood posits, "the ideal laboratory" to observe Jesus's commandments of love because love requires solidarity and vulnerability with another without control of the other—a recipe for suffering but also for great joy. This utopia in which there is no pain and no suffering would also leave no room for pleasure or meaning, which are derived from the former. And it is available today, should one choose to become addicted to morphine.

REVEREND STEVE SCHOFIELD
Bostwick, Georgia

To the editors:
James Wood's "not very 'edifying'" conclusion that there is no God is, indeed, unedifying. Given our current knowledge that the universe had a beginning in time, and Pasteur's disproof of spontaneous generation, there is no explanation for the origin of the universe's first molecule without positing the existence of God. As a wise man once said, "The religious man must account for suffering in the world; the irreligious man must account for everything else."

RABBI NAHUM SPIRN
Hebrew Theological College
Skokie, Illinois

To the editors:
James Wood claims that "the most sophisticated defense of God's relation to evil" is the free will argument. But he has forgotten the point of his opening paragraph: Free will has nothing to do with natural disaster. Did those hapless Alabamans *choose* to live in the tornado's path? Or was the disaster their just punishment for *choosing* not to believe strongly enough in the right God?

Most other justifications of God's goodness in the face of tragedy smack strongly of selfishness and myopia: "We need the bad to appreciate the good." (Fortunately the bad happened to someone else.) Or: "God's ways are inscrutable." (But only when bad things happen; for good events are easy to understand—merit received reward.) After mountains of clichés like this, one's stomach begins to turn. Congratulations to James Wood and TNR for publicly challenging these opinions.

ADAM CHALOM
Beverly Hills, Michigan

To the editors:
When I asked why my wife was allowed to die of the effects of preeclampsia two days after giving premature birth to our daughter (who died at birth), I must confess that I found no answer that in any way touched my pain. I believed and still believe that my wife, who, like myself, was a Christian, and our infant daughter, who was well under the age of accountability, were in the presence of God and that all was eternally well with them. But that in no way delivered me from the necessity of enduring the usual emotional and psychological effects of horrendous grief. At such times there are no answers that are available to suffering because the suffering mind cannot hold them.

My wife died because of medical neglect. The neglect occurred because human beings are imperfect. Her death occurred because mortality is the penalty humanity incurred when it abandoned its God-given sovereignty over nature in a bid for autonomous sovereignty. That wasn't her fault, nor was it mine. It was the way things are; our first parents pissed in our soup, and we have to drink it. I can provide no guarantee that I would have done better; given what I know of myself as a human being, I have the potential for doing as badly or worse.

But does this mean God is monstrous or nonexistent? When I railed at God as The One with whom the cosmic buck must ultimately stop, I did so with the knowledge that He was also my last and best hope for my wife and daughter—that He had already done more to ameliorate the fact of human death and suffering than any human would ever be able to do. This is not some idea of heaven as compensation for human suffering. Rather, it is a recognition that the story need not end at death. There is a huge difference between the two.

Meanwhile, the world is a dangerous place. Both Mr. Wood and I wish it were otherwise. I think we would like each other were we to meet, not only because we are moved by the same kinds of things, but because we are both created in God's image, and something of the glory rests, I think, on every movement of the human soul that protests the exigencies of a world created good but somehow ruined. We both know things could be better.

LYLE H. SMITH
La Habra, California

To the editors:
To me, demanding to know why pain exists has always seemed more than a lit-

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tle selfish. My mother, as saintly a woman as one can possibly imagine, died of Alzheimer's disease—as degrading a death as one can possibly die. Yet I never asked God why He permitted one of His devoted servants to die in this manner or doubted His existence because of it.

Because what if God had laid out in exhaustive detail why, in His scheme, my mother had to have Alzheimer's? When God finished, I'd still be left with an inescapable fact: My mother had Alzheimer's. What good would my knowing why have done her?

A universe with God is an occasionally impenetrable mystery. James Wood's universe is a psychopath that maims, kills, and destroys for no reason at all.

CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON
Webster Groves, Missouri

James Wood replies:

All who believe in God must explain why this world is clearly imperfect. The best reply is that we must have free will so that our actions, both in relation to one another and to God, are meaningful. This world, in Leibniz's words, is the best of all *possible* worlds. Yet this reply will not do. It cannot address natural disasters such as earthquakes; but it is vulnerable, anyway, to Schopenhauer's objection, that God created both the world and "also the possibility itself; accordingly, he should have arranged this with a view to its admitting of a better world."

Admission errors

To the editors:

Nathan Glazer's article on the City University of New York in your May 11 issue ("Enroll On") gave an important historical dimension to the current dispute about academic standards and the proper role of CUNY. However, it contained one misstatement: Under the California Master Plan for Higher Education, the top third (not the top half) could go to one of the campuses of the California State University.

ARNOLD NEIDERBACH
El Sobrante, California

Who's being censored?

To the editors:

As I interpret your June 8 Notebook item ("White Lines"), you criticize me for being publicly critical of CBS for backing out of a contract with Reggie White. Gee, I hope you're not suggesting that I be censored! My view "mangles the concept of free speech," while your castigation of me apparently is good, clean commentary. While we're on the subject of what constitutes responsible commentary, you might inform your readers that, as CBS rejects Mr. White, it is adding Howard Stern to its galaxy of stars.

The network's decision to drop Mr. White as a sportscaster was out of fear of being harassed by homosexual activists. He, his agent, and his wife were told this directly by an executive at CBS Sports. While you are defending freedom of speech, you might direct your comments to the homosexual militants who try to squelch anyone who disagrees with their agenda.

As for Mr. White's remarks concerning ethnic differences, anyone familiar with the entire speech should have little difficulty discerning Mr. White's intent, which was to celebrate human diversity as a gift from God. While Mr. White

has acknowledged that he might have phrased his remarks differently so as not to be misconstrued, there is no widespread outcry from ethnic groups against him. There is only a campaign by homosexual activists to punish him for giving a clear, Christian message about homosexuality's temporal and eternal consequences.

Our recent luncheon in Mr. White's honor included a speech by Anthony Falzarano of Transformation Ex-Gay Ministries, along with an appearance by about a dozen former homosexuals. Their message is the same as Mr. White's—love the sinner, not the sin, and speak the truth in love.

GARY L. BAUER
President
Family Research Council
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

I was not present for Mr. White's off-color remark about gays, blacks, Latinos, whites, and Asians. However, the remarks you quoted as justification for his firing sounded to me like jokes. While jokes can be offensive, and even sometimes unfunny, it seems a bit extreme to make a big decision about someone's career based solely on attempts at humor. I hope one would not lose a career in journalism from the references to "show tunes" in regards to gays that TNR made in the same issue, two paragraphs after the Notebook item on White.

MATTHEW BARTON
Via the Internet

Mideast muddle

To the editors:

Your June 1 issue offered two similarly disturbing pieces ("A Crisis of Partnership" and "Shifting Sands") accusing the U.S. administration of badgering Israel for concessions and trying to "shake down" Netanyahu. What sort of terminology is this to describe a process of negotiating between adversaries looking for a middle ground? Both articles are laced with complete disregard for Palestinian security and sovereignty, for this population rendered voiceless, marginalized in its homeland.

There must be a secure Palestine to have a secure Israel, and this would entail Israeli concessions. Peace demands security for both, for all. Your snotty criticisms of the U.S. administration's efforts to achieve this are shortsighted and hysterical. Most reasonable people nowadays realize that there is a legitimate Palestinian side to the story. So what happened to you?

PATRICE A. LORD
San Diego, California

Believable *Bulworth*

To the editors:

While I will agree that some moments in *Bulworth* strain credulity, I think some of Stanley Kauffmann's objections ("Color Lines," June 8) to plot details can be cleared up with a second viewing.

Take the favorable attention with which Bulworth's transformation into a truth-telling "white Negro" is received. To find this credible, one need only think back to 1996. In a boring election year, a senatorial candidate suddenly behaving erratically would make big news; news agencies would jump to cover him. After the brief public embraces of candidates like Perot and Buchanan, it is not hard to imagine a public quickly being enamored of a character like Bulworth for at least the short time period of the story.

MICHAEL GRABOWSKI
Fullerton, California

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FROM WASHINGTON

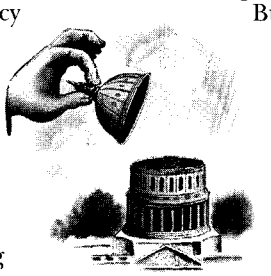
Profit motives

The arguments for replacing Social Security with a system of private investment accounts have always struck me as morally dubious. For one thing, I've long suspected many conservatives resent Social Security simply because it came from the New Deal; I also know that privatization's popularity has a lot to do with lobbying by investment firms that stand to make literally billions from the scheme. Nevertheless, in recent weeks, privatization advocates have trotted out an argument so breathtakingly cynical that it surprises even me. And, while it's unlikely the final decision about what to do with Social Security would turn on this particular contention, it is worth dissecting because it is emblematic of the intellectual chicanery that dominates—and may well win—the debate.

The argument in question was the subject of a front-page news analysis Monday in (where else?) *The Washington Times.* But its real genesis was research conducted by (who else?) the Heritage Foundation. As the *Times* helpfully explained, "Americans get less back from Social Security than if they had privately invested their payroll taxes, Heritage says. But, because minorities tend to die earlier, their 'rate of return' is particularly grim." The obvious implication: Social Security takes from the have-nots (in this case, minorities) and gives to the haves (in this case, whites). And to think FDR's critics called him a class traitor.

There is, in fact, a sliver of truth here: As a whole, blacks and Hispanics will suffer a penalty because of their comparatively short average life spans. This is because, after you retire, Social Security pays you a fixed sum, month after month, until your death. The longer you live, the more money you will receive and the better your "investment" in the system seems. Remember, you finance Social Security through payroll taxes—so people who make equal incomes over the course of a working lifetime will have invested equal amounts in the system by the time they retire.

Of course, this concern for the comparative well-being of downtrodden racial groups sounds just a bit artificial coming from the likes of House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Senator Rick Santorum, both of whom figure prominently in the *Times* story. ("We are the party of the little people," Santorum says.) After all, isn't this precisely the kind of race-conscious thinking that Republicans so detest in every other facet of life? Or is this the dawn of a new ideological age within the GOP? (Just think of it—capital gains cuts for black investors only!) Another odd thing about the sudden attention to comparative life expectancy rates is that it comes just as Republicans are lobbying feverishly to kill a census plan that would increase the official count of blacks and minorities in the U.S. population. Apparently, Republicans want blacks and Hispanics to live long and fruitful lives—just as long as there aren't too many of them in swing districts.



But I digress. This is about the merits, not the motives, of the new Republican argument. And it's on the merits that the argument fails. While Social Security may redistribute some money from minorities to whites, that redistribution pales in comparison to the transfer of wealth from rich to poor. Today, low-income workers get more than three times the return on their investment than well-off workers get because Social Security pays a minimum fixed benefit to everybody, no matter how little they've paid into the system. This is the whole point of social insurance—to provide everybody with a baseline income in retirement. (More than half of the U.S. elderly would fall below the poverty line without Social Security.) All low-income workers benefit from Social Security; since blacks and Hispanics are disproportionately poor they benefit disproportionately.

To be sure, the Heritage research does make another important point: namely that blacks and Hispanics would make even more money from a system of private investment accounts than they do from the existing program. It's a valid argument, if true, and it's based on the fact that, on average, private securities yield much higher returns than government bonds, which is how the Social Security system currently invests its money. But notice the key phrase here: *on average.* That average takes into account both the lucky few who will hit stock market pay dirt and the less lucky many who will just get by. Less affluent investors tend to fall into the latter category. This is because you have to put money into risky investments to make a lot of money in the stock market. People with very little money in the first place are understandably reluctant to take such risks, since retiring just after a market crash could substantially deplete one's account. So they instead sink their funds into the safest, least lucrative investments, whose yields are more similar to the current Social Security return—particularly once you take away the money that has to be spent on fees to investment managers. (Yes, a few low-income people might make riskier investments. But, since they'd inevitably have little stock market experience, they'd be most vulnerable to scams and most likely to fritter their money away on bad investments.)

Still, given that we really need to do something about the long-term deficit in the Social Security trust fund, isn't there a way to capture the stock market's higher yields without undermining the existing program and without penalizing less affluent earners or exposing them to market risk? Absolutely. The government could gradually invest a portion of the trust fund in passive stock funds pegged to reliable indices like the S&P 500, while leaving the benefit structure relatively untouched.

Privatization advocates insist that this is a horrible idea: They say it would give the government too much control over the economy, and the temptation for political tinkering would be immense. But this is a red herring. The government wouldn't be trading very often, thus blunting the economic impact of its holdings. And it would be easy to prohibit manipulation of the market for political reasons. All you would have to do is assign responsibility for the investments to a quasi-independent body, then carefully limit how it can make investment decisions.

Indeed, only two intellectually honest arguments come to mind for why the government-investment model is inferior to the private-investment model: It'd still be a big, collective government program; and there'd be no massive windfall for Wall Street investment houses. But, of course, that would imply the rationale for privatization is ideology or greed. And the last thing I want to do is to question anybody's motives.

JONATHAN COHN

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JULY 13, 1998

COURTING DISASTER

One hundred and fifty-nine member states of the United Nations are meeting in Rome to draft a treaty creating an international war crimes tribunal. It's a laudable goal: to make permanent the kind of legal institution that the "international community" has so far managed to create only in special cases such as the Nuremberg tribunal or the current Bosnia tribunal in The Hague. Genocide and other crimes against humanity are surely the scourge of this century; and Pol Pot, Saddam Hussein, and others were never brought to justice. What better way to begin the next century than by establishing a mechanism to hold the individuals who perpetrate mass murder accountable?

And yet the United States is leading the opposition to this seemingly unexceptionable idea. The U.S. insists that it (and the other four permanent members of the Security Council) retain a veto over any prospective investigation by the court—lest American soldiers find themselves hauled before a judge every time one of their smart missiles lands amidst civilians. This cautious position has earned the U.S. the opprobrium of the world; it has been duly and sardonically noted that America is on the same side of the issue as Iraq and Burma. Emma Bonino, Italy's European commissioner for humanitarian aid, observed that "I cannot believe that a major democracy with so active a peacekeeping role would want to have an image of insisting that its soldiers be given license never to be investigated."

But something even more unbelievable is going on: Iraq and Burma are sitting at the treaty-drafting table. And the participation of these odious regimes suggests the central flaw in the assumptions underlying the proposed court. The plan offers a juridical solution to problems—large-scale crimes against humanity or organized genocide—whose causes are political and philosophical.

Hans Corell, the United Nations special representative to the conference in Rome, summarizes the thinking of the pro-treaty forces when he says, "What we have seen in this century is the disastrous effects of impunity." Well, yes, except that the really scandalous impunity that has been enjoyed by mass murderers and ethnic cleansers was not only legal, but, more importantly, it was political and military. Totalitarian, authoritarian, and racist states and organizations initiated acts of aggression and genocide that were not met by a countervailing use of force. They got away with their crimes because no one dispatched soldiers to challenge them, not because there were no lawyers dispatched to indict them. Prosecutors do not deter evil. Armies do.

Two cases illustrate the point. The Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic have been indicted by the current tribunal in The Hague. The law is after them. But they have escaped accountability because no outside power has been willing to use its troops to arrest them and because outside powers feel obliged to do business with the state which sponsored their crimes, and which still protects them, Slobodan Milosevic's Yugoslavia. Conversely, neither Hitler himself nor most of his chief henchmen were ever brought to trial; and yet he and his regime and his state hardly came out of World War II unscathed. The Third Reich was not arraigned. It was defeated. In this sense, Nuremberg was an afterthought. It dignified legally what had been accomplished militarily. The indictment was just because the war was just.

Is it really true that the United States is asking for a "license never to be investigated"? The American position may seem self-interested; but the important fact is

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that the United States is a stable, well-established democracy. Its soldiers are not only raised in a democratic culture, they are also given extensive training in the laws of war and are subject to formal and effective mechanisms, legal and administrative, to ensure individual accountability. The same goes for the civilian politicians who give them their orders. No, the American system is not perfect; American soldiers have indeed been guilty of atrocities. But the American system also functions to expose and to punish those atrocities. Pol Pot died in his bed, but Lieutenant William Calley was punished (albeit insufficiently) for the massacre at My Lai by the country in whose name he committed it; and the U.S. government itself conducted a credible investigation of both the massacre and the cover-up by Calley's superiors.

A supranational tribunal that equated democratic states that own up to their own accountability, however partially, with tyrannical states that do not even understand the concept of accountability is not only philosophically offensive; it is also, for the democracies, somewhat redundant. And, practically speaking, it may have a terrible unintended effect. If it is recognized that the only proper response to genocide is the prompt use of force, then it must also be recognized that only the United States has the political and military muscle to lead such a response to genocide. And then it must be recognized that the existence of a war crimes tribunal that could politicize the discussion of genocide, and mischievously investigate U.S. actions outside of U.S. jurisdiction, would give the U.S. military, and its often equally timid civilian masters, a new and powerful reason to do nothing. Given American hesitation in places such as Bosnia and Rwanda, do we really want to supply more reasons not to get involved?

We admire and we share the impulses that move human rights activists to support the war crimes tribunal. Legal impunity may be a lesser impunity, but it is nonetheless a real one. And the assertion of law against crimes of such magnitude is itself an assertion of moral and philosophical clarity. But the stakes are too high not to think practically. What, precisely, would the tribunal under consideration in Rome really deter: genocide, or the swift and decisive intervention that can stop it? •

NOTEBOOK

DON'T BLAME EL NIÑO: Wondering why Florida has been the victim of so many natural disasters lately? Apparently, some members of the Christian right think they may have the answer. After the Orlando City Council voted earlier this month to allow gay organizations to hang rainbow flags from the town's flagpoles as a sign of support for "diversity," Pat Robertson delivered a stern message on "The 700 Club," his TV show. "I would warn Orlando that you're right in the way of some serious hurricanes," noted Robertson, "and I don't think I'd be waving those flags in God's face if I were you." Earlier, he had said of deviant behavior generally, "[I]f it'll bring about terrorist bombs, if it'll bring about earthquakes, tornadoes, and possibly a meteor, it isn't necessarily something we ought to open our arms to." Robertson didn't mention the fires that have since engulfed much of the drought-stricken state. But others from his end of the political spectrum were quick to draw the connection. In a June 24 blast-fax headlined "FIRES, FIRES, EVERYWHERE!" the anti-abortion group Operation Rescue National warned, "The city of Orlando cannot shake her fist in the face of Almighty God without consequences.... A city that protects child killers ... and those who promote the homosexual lifestyle should not be surprised that the judgement of God would fall." Also: "The solution for the fires in Central Florida is not rain—it is for city officials to repent of their sins!" All right. But if that doesn't work, *then* can we ratify the global warming treaty?

UNSCOM WATCH, VII: "These findings show that they did weaponize it; they put it in missile warheads," announced Richard Butler, executive chairman of the United Nations Special Commission in charge of investigating Iraq's program for making weapons of mass destruction. The "it" in question is VX nerve gas, a substance so deadly that just a few drops of it are enough to kill a human being within a few minutes. Iraq manufactured at least 3.9 tons of the stuff, according to the U.N. In March and again in early June, UNSCOM's inspectors went back to an old pit where Iraq had buried some of its destroyed missiles instead of turning the parts over to the U.N. This investigation led to Butler's "utterly unambiguous" findings, first reported in *The Washington Post* on June 23. A chemical analysis of warhead fragments dug up by the UNSCOM inspectors revealed that the missiles had, indeed, been armed with VX. That contradicted seven years of Iraqi denials that Saddam's armed forces had ever been able to turn the agent into a usable weapon. "I guess so," Butler answered when CNN's Bernard Shaw later asked him if this meant that Iraq had lied to the U.N. We guess so, too. But what did Butler expect? If he seemed sheepish about this, he ought to. Only a few days earlier, he and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz had been standing side by side in Baghdad, smiling for photographers and exchanging pleasantries. "A very fruitful meeting," beamed Aziz. "We have completed some very searching talks.... I think the light at the end of the tunnel is today more visible than it's been for a very long time," Butler replied. The ostensible purpose of this chummy meeting was to lay out a two-month "road map," according to which Iraq would come clean about the last few details of its secret weapons programs, and then would be rewarded by a lifting of economic sanctions. Of course, the latest news about the sanctions shows that Saddam's protests about them, like his momentary flirtation with Butler's road map, is little more than propaganda—because the

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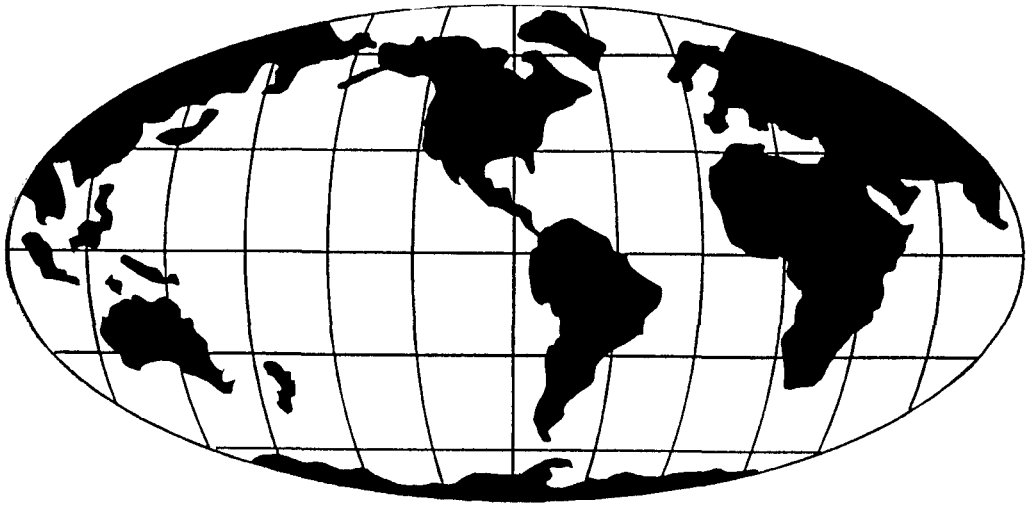

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sanctions themselves are increasingly a joke. On June 19, James Risen of *The New York Times* reported that Iraq is shipping over 50,000 barrels of oil per day through Turkey. The U.S., in deference to the purported economic needs of its Turkish allies, is turning a blind eye. Kickbacks from the trade go directly into the pockets of Saddam's son, Uday Hussein, which may help explain why the dictator's family has been able to keep building new palaces for itself over the last few years, while the Iraqi people suffer. The *Times* also takes note of the belief among diplomats that Iraq is "counting additionally on President Clinton's unwillingness to face any major crisis with Iraq, or to take military action in the fall, just before a congressional election." We don't doubt that such thoughts have occurred to folks at the White House. But surely they also realize that there is a political price to pay for too soft a line as well. The Republican leadership in Congress has just sent President Clinton a letter questioning whether his administration has been giving UNSCOM the support it deserves and calling the administration's strategy "a failed policy." This note could be setting the stage for a GOP assault on the Clinton Iraq policy in the fall. What is the president prepared to do to prove them wrong? •

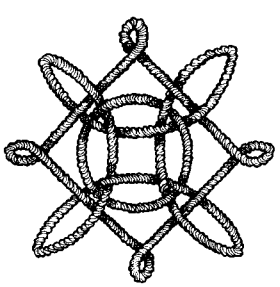
THE HARD QUESTIONS

HIJACKED

By Ronald Steel

The guerrilla war in Kosovo is a nightmare for the people of the Balkans, but NATO bureaucrats and some European politicians see it as an opportunity. Therein lies the problem.

The Balkans story is an old one. One ethnic group feels oppressed under the rule of another one. It takes to the streets in protest, then to the hills. Its goal is either to make life miserable for its foes or else to gain the sympathy of outsiders who—moved by pity or self-interest—will fight the battle for it.



The NATO story is a new one. During the bad old days of the cold war, NATO cared as little about the feuding ethnics of Yugoslavia as it did about the squabbles of the Hindus and the Muslims in India. But, with the demise of the Soviet Union, NATO, like any bureaucracy, has tried to survive by both expanding its membership and redefining its mission. No longer needed to hold back Soviet forces, it has declared itself Europe's peacekeeper.

The Yugoslav breakup has provided a field of action for a military alliance in search of a mission. Indeed, NATO and Yugoslavia have a lot in common. Yugoslavia was a multinational state held together since 1945 by authoritarian rulers and the rigid battle lines of the cold war. NATO, a multistate military alliance, is also a creature of the cold war. Yugoslavia failed to find a new identity after the lifting of the Iron Curtain, and it tottered through a painful process of disintegration. NATO, having no enemy to contain but reluctant to cash in its chips, scurries about for something to do.

Yugoslavia gives NATO something to do at a price that—so far at least—has been relatively cheap. In Bosnia, where the first test of the new doctrine took place, the marauding Serb forces retreated, and the three rival ethnic groups settled into their respective trenches. Of course, the country is still effectively partitioned, and the dream of a unified multiethnic state recedes into the ever-dimmer future. But no U.S. NATO soldiers have yet been killed in combat, even though they will likely be bogged down there for several years, or decades, to come.

Kosovo is another story. It is not an independent state, as Bosnia was (briefly) before the war erupted, but an internationally acknowledged province of Yugoslavia. It is a province in rebellion against the central government, and NATO has about as much legal right to interfere there as it would in Kashmir or Nigeria or Indonesia or, for that matter, Israel.

So why are we sending a NATO air force to conduct mock bombing raids along the Yugoslav border? Do we want the guerillas to carve out a separate state and then, from that base, extend their war for a Greater Albania into Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Greece? Presumably not. "We support enhanced autonomy," State Department spokesman James Rubin said last week, "but people are deluding themselves if they think that they are going to achieve independence." But wars of this sort are always based in part on delusion, and one of these may be ours. And, if we get sucked in deeper, it wouldn't be the first time that the U.S. went into someone else's quarrel for a dime and ended up betting the family savings.

What we seem to want is for the Serbs to behave nicer to the mostly Albanian people of Kosovo: to restore the autonomy that Milosevic took away in 1989 and let everybody just get along. But it's too late for that. Someone will have to force the Serbs to give up. The Albanian rebels know that they cannot do this on their own. That is why they want to drag NATO into their fight. The more they provoke the Serbs, and the more force the Serbs use in response, the greater the chance that NATO will intervene. Thus the prime target of the rebels is not the Serb army but the Western publics for whose sympathy they can appeal through TV images of bombed villages and trudging refugees.

Is this the new NATO? A trans-Atlantic posse that can be summoned by any group with ambitions to set up a state of its own? In its frenzy to become relevant to a world it wasn't made for, NATO is in danger of becoming not only frivolous but dangerous: frivolous in that it now declares that virtually everything is its business, danger-

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ous in that it threatens to involve the U.S. in quarrels it cannot resolve and in which it has no serious stake.

How did we get into this mess? Partly because Tony Blair, eager for a bigger role on the world stage, proposed that the U.N. authorize NATO military intervention in Kosovo and persuaded Bill Clinton to go along. Partly because it was assumed that nobody would object to dropping some bombs on the Serbs to make them lay off the Albanians. And mostly because NATO has to keep busy to stay relevant.

Where this haphazard, off-the-cuff intervention will lead is hard to tell. It might make the Serbs calm down or, more likely, encourage the rebels to step up their attacks. Having once intervened on such flimsy grounds and with such vague objectives, NATO will likely lose control over where it is going. It is in danger of becoming hostage to every dissatisfied or abused group with grievances that it hopes to induce others to resolve for it.

What is going on today in Kosovo is simply the early stage of a game that NATO has stumbled into more by accident than by design. But it is a game that is likely to involve the U.S. in the kinds of quarrels it never contemplated when it put the alliance together nearly 50 years ago. Then we pledged, in our own interest, to protect Western Europe from a foreign invader that could change the world power balance against us. Today we are being manipulated into involvement in ancient ethnic and territorial feuds. We need to rethink not only what we are doing in Kosovo but whether NATO, in its search for a mission, is taking us places we do not want to go. •

PAHRUMP POSTCARD

LIBERTARIANVILLE

By Florence Williams

From a distance, the flag in front of the Terrible's Town gas station, restaurant, and casino complex in Pahrump, Nevada, looks normal-sized. But that's only because it's dwarfed by the massive, bleached valley that surrounds it. As you drive toward it on Highway 160 from Las Vegas, the banner just keeps expanding. By the time you arrive at its base, you realize the flag is actually almost as big as a tractor-trailer.

Pahrump also seems to be getting bigger and bigger. As recently as 1990 it was a desert outpost with a population of 7,600. But thanks to an influx of retirees and Las Vegas workers attracted by the area's cheap land—and of California transplants attracted by Nevada's lack of a state income tax—Pahrump's population has since exploded to over 24,000. That should make Pahrump one of the fastest-growing towns in the state—and, for that matter, the nation—except for one thing. Pahrump isn't, strictly speaking, a town. Pahrump's residents have voted against incorporation twice, citing a disdain for more taxes and bureaucracy. So the closest thing to a local government is the county seat 165 miles away—making Pahrump a kind of libertarian paradise.

Pahrump's laissez-faire approach is immediately evident. There's no city hall, no smog check, and most of the roads are not paved. They are, however, jammed with traffic, including the stretch limos of big-city johns drawn by the county's legalized prostitution. Yet for all this transit Pahrump has only one traffic light—on the corner where Terrible's Town stands. If you want to make a left turn from anywhere else, tough luck.

Entertainment in Pahrump also has a Wild West flavor. Among the town's nearby draws are the Venus Bath Massage Salon, the Brothel Art Museum ("the oldest tourist attraction in Southern Nevada and the only museum of its kind in the world"), five brothels, and three large casinos.

Every other business appears to be a mobile home dealership. Times are clearly good: double-wides and single-wides fan out to the horizon in every direction. According to Ron Williams, the county planner (there is no town planner), two-thirds of the housing here arrived prêt-à-porter on flatbed trucks. Landscaping largely consists of chain-link fences and antlers in the front yard.

Ray Wulfenstein is one of those who has profited from the boom. He owns a residential subdivision, an RV park, a bank, a motel, a car wash, a shopping center, and several office buildings. When I stop by to visit him, he's wearing a white satin jacket and a tan. It's not hard to divine the secret to his success. Pahrump has no zoning board and no building department; it issues no building permits and requires no inspections (although the county plans to start doing both by November). The result has been a construction explosion. "From a developer's perspective, you can't beat it here," says Wulfenstein. "This has been pretty darn good." Still, he muses, he does miss the old days before there was traffic.

Ben DePue is another Pahrump resident who worries about the side effects of Pahrump's minimalist approach to government. DePue chairs Pahrump's volunteer planning commission, which was set up two years ago to advise the five county commissioners on how to handle the town's unprecedented growth. I meet DePue, a tall man with wild hair and a mellow manner, at his place—a complex of old trucks, two rental mobile homes, and a rambling wooden house. He gives me a quick tour. When he moved here in 1992 from Henderson, Nevada ("it was getting too big"), he immediately ran into trouble with the house. "It was assured to me by the seller that this meets all code," DePue explains. "But I find power lines twelve inches underground instead of three feet underground, encased in water pipe, not electrical pipe; the foundation's not properly set. I find electrical panels not correct; the stair treads are an improper depth and height and on and on. People ...

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have built whatever they want. This is the last place in Nevada, and maybe the U.S., that you can do that. Maybe it's time for building and inspection codes."

DePue folds himself into my car for a ride around town. Soon we're about to take a dreaded left turn off a dirt road onto a narrow asphalt one. During the agonizing wait, DePue falls silent for a few moments, then turns to me. He wants to make sure I haven't pegged him as a stickler for rules and regulations—a big government type. "In my personal opinion," he says, "the government is your enemy. Even though I'm on the planning commission, I'm on it to see that we have some sort of Christian, orderly approach to the situation."

I'm not sure about Christian, but I can see it's too late for orderly. New developments and streets are overtaking old cotton fields so fast that many streets are as yet unnamed. "I've already named streets after every one of my kids and grandkids," says DePue. "I'm running out." He points out new subdivisions, old subdivisions, and about-to-be subdivisions. They alternate with dairy farms, rusted cotton haulers, industrial metal buildings, and unplowed rabbitbrush-pocked desert in no apparent grand design. DePue shakes his head. "It's like that card game, you know, fifty-two pickup. Well, that's just about the way it went. They said 'blooom'"—at this point, he throws his arms skyward—"and, where the cards landed, that's where the people live."

Do Pahrumpians really like it this way? Do they enjoy doing kamikaze peel-outs and spending 45 minutes driving to the grocery store 15 miles away? DePue shrugs. "I think most everyone would regret that it wasn't more thought out. By the same token, you gotta remember, they were maybe drawn here by that."

FLORENCE WILLIAMS is a writer in western Montana.

Students stand up for their right to drink.

PARTY POLITICS

By Ryan Lizza

Adam Herringa comes from a family of fighters: his great-great-grandfather was a Union cavalryman in the Civil War, and his father volunteered for Korea. So perhaps it is not surprising that Herringa, a 22-year-old recent graduate of Michigan State University, was a principal organizer of one of the largest college demonstrations in recent memory, a 3,000-strong student uprising that convulsed MSU on May 1. And the noble idea behind this act of rebellion? It was a protest against a ban on alcohol at a popular football game tailgating spot. In Herringa's view, tailgaters are being victimized by administrators bent on forcing young people to conform. "They tend to scapegoat alcohol whenever they want to crack down on something," he says. "They use the guise of binge drinking to control issues on campus."

And the outburst at MSU was merely the largest of at least nine alcohol-related disturbances on campuses this spring. At Washington State University this May, a mob of undergraduates, dissatisfied with an alcohol ban at fraternities, assaulted police officers with beer cans and rocks—injuring two dozen officers. In April, students clashed with police over two days at the University of Connecticut, setting fires and vandalizing 27 police cars during an annual weekend of partying. At bucolic Ohio University, in what is becoming a tradition known locally as "the fracas," about 2,000 students took to the streets early on April 5, launching an attack on police to protest the loss of one hour's worth of drinking caused by the shift to daylight saving time.

At some colleges it was the most raucous semester since 1968, and—to hear pro-booze activists like Adam Herringa describe it—it was characterized by the same level of righteousness. Of course the college officials imposing new alcohol rules have a slightly different perspective—informed by the law as well as a well-publicized string of alcohol-related campus deaths. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology or its officials, for example, could face charges of involuntary manslaughter because a drunk student reportedly left alone in a basement by his fraternity brothers passed out, began to vomit, and then choked until his breathing stopped. He died two days later. (MIT says, in a press release, that, while the student's death was a tragedy, it cannot be held responsible for it. The school also emphasizes that there is "no legal precedent" for bringing criminal charges and that doing so "would be the worst message to send to universities.")

In the last 15 months, according to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, 18 inebriated students have died in alcohol-related mishaps like falling out of windows, falling into rivers, falling down flights of stairs, or simply choking on their own vomit. A 1994 study of almost 18,000 students nationwide, conducted by the Harvard psychologist Henry Wechsler, found that nearly half of the nation's young scholars are binge-drinkers, meaning it's normal for men to chug five or more drinks, and women four or more, in a night. Little wonder that, in survey after survey, college presidents rank drinking as the number one problem on campus.

It wasn't always so. For years universities have been reluctant to take on the extra responsibilities that go along with comprehensive alcohol policies for one reason: liability. Paradoxically, every measure a college adopted to protect a student from the dangers of drinking made the college that much more vulnerable to negligence claims. A string of court decisions reinforced this logic by ruling that colleges were not babysitters and thus were not responsible for controlling private student conduct. (The legal principle of in

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loco parentis doesn't apply.)

Now schools find themselves in a bind. They're under increasing pressure to crack down on campus drinking, even though doing so would increase their liability. Even the federal government has gotten into the act. In January Donna Shalala, the secretary of health and human services (and former University of Wisconsin chancellor), implored NCAA officials to disassociate themselves from the alcohol industry. Senators Joseph Biden and Robert Byrd, and Representative Joe Kennedy are all sponsoring anti-college-drinking measures on Capitol Hill.

To Adam Herringa and his companions, this all smacks of overreaction. The issue, Herringa insists, is not drinking per se but rather the fact that colleges set alcohol policy without first consulting students. "We felt alienated," he says, citing a litany of administrative abuses: First, Michigan State shortened the notoriously bacchanalian student orientation period from a week to just a few days. Then, the school banned kegs from tailgate parties at the now infamous Munn Field. ("If they would've just kept kegs," Herringa says with exasperation. "By eliminating one problem they created another.") In hindsight, even the administrators agree that they should have let students in on the decisions. "We're not accepting blame for the riots, but I do believe that communication was definitely a factor," says MSU spokesperson Kristan Tetens.

But the total ban on alcohol did strike at the heart of the student body's most treasured pastime—getting drunk before football games. So, using e-mail, Herringa and a friend organized what they billed as both a "vigil/protest" and "one last party" at Munn Field. For a week the e-mail ricocheted around campus until the entire city of East Lansing was buzzing with anticipation of the Friday night protest. "It just exploded," Herringa says. Soon it wasn't just a party but a revolutionary struggle. By Thursday an op-ed in the school newspaper was calling on students to "stand [and] fight against tyranny" and the "demonizing hegemony."

What occurred was, perhaps, a shade less heroic. A drunken mob gathered until police ordered them off the field. Protesters then decided to march on the university president's home, chanting the MSU fight song and anti-University of Michigan slogans along the way. Then the chief of police stood outside President Peter McPherson's home and addressed the crowd: The president, it turned out, was away for the evening and would not be seeing them. The peaceful vigil descended into a violent riot: Protesters set bonfires and pelted police with bottles and rocks for several hours, until around dawn, when most of the bonfires were extinguished and bursts of tear gas sent the crowds home. Herringa says he was "proud" to be a part of the march, even though he declined to take part in the violence.

Needless to say, older generations of student protesters are not altogether impressed with the self-proclaimed heirs to their tradition. "I think it's pathetic," says Todd Gitlin, the '60s chronicler and former Students for a Democratic Society leader. "There is a certain population who couldn't think of anything more wholesome than fighting for the right to party." In a way, what today's alcohol protests are about is preserving university "traditions" that revolve around booze. (Drinking has always been associated with some college rites of passage. Wechsler likes to point out that in colonial times Harvard University's graduation procession was led by the county sheriff precisely because the University could count on him to control the inebriated graduates.) One of the University of Virginia's quaint customs is the annual Foxfield Races, described by the campus newspaper, *The Cavalier Daily*, as a "twenty-year tradition of drunken debauchery." Then, there's the "fourth-year fifth," a ritual where seniors down a fifth of a gallon of hard liquor before the start of the last home football game of the year.

Yet today what parents and the media are noticing are the costs of these rites of passage. On any given weekend, about ten UVA revelers seek shelter at the campus emergency room for alcohol-related problems. An average of one to three students die alcohol-related deaths each year. Those sobering statistics and the widely reported death of a student forced UVA to admit there was a problem. "The death of Leslie Baltz"—a student who fell down a flight of stairs after apparently drinking her fourth-year fifth—"was the major impetus for pulling together a[n alcohol] task force," says UVA director of student health, Dr. James Turner.

When fraternities at Virginia were faced with a choice between banning alcohol or pushing the recruitment of new pledges back from the fall to the spring, they chose the latter, despite the huge financial loss it caused. "They chose kegs over money," says Jay Conti, the editor-in-chief of *The Cavalier Daily*. The fraternity leadership had little choice: Their members threatened a massive protest. It's not just the students whose habits die hard. In May, when an alcohol-policy task force recommended banning booze at tailgate parties, which are technically illegal but have been tolerated by authorities for years, the school's own president, John T. Casteen III, defended the parties as "activities that many here cherish." Alumni also joined in supporting the pre-game bashes. As an old Virginia joke goes, "Whenever two or three UVA students come together, there is bound to be a fifth."

Of course, UVA has not witnessed the kind of rebellions that occurred at schools like Michigan State and Ohio University this year. "It takes a lot to get people riled up and excited at this school," says Jay Conti. "It would take banning alcohol to have a riot here." And UVA's not likely to do that anytime soon. In fact, some universities are licking their wounds and reevaluating their recent crackdowns. At Michigan State, Adam Herringa was invited onto a special "action team" to ensure student participation in future alcohol policymaking. He is triumphant: "If it took a riot to form the action team, then so be it," he says. "I have no regrets." •

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Does Clinton want a Palestinian state?

NEW NUANCES

By Robert Satloff

Though it has escaped the attention of the media, the Clinton administration seems to have decided on a Middle East policy that does not rule out U.S. recognition of a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood. The articulation of this policy has come subtly, emerging not from the direct comments of the president himself, but from the carefully parsed statements of administration figures ranging from the first lady to the vice president. But it is real nonetheless and potentially risky.

This latest nuance also represents a historic change in America's diplomatic posture. After the Arabs lost the West Bank and Gaza to Israel in 1967, the assumption of postwar diplomacy was that Israel would trade "land for peace" with the former rulers of the territories, Jordan and Egypt, respectively. Palestinians only entered the stage in 1978, when they were offered—and rejected—"autonomy" in the Camp David accords. In 1982, the abortive Reagan plan categorically declared that "peace cannot be achieved by the formation of an independent Palestinian state in [the] territories."

The late 1980s saw a shift. The second Reagan administration, the Dukakis campaign (including then-foreign-policy adviser Madeleine Albright), and the Bush White House all declared that they "did not support" Palestinian statehood and would oppose its unilateral declaration. However, they all said they would agree to any outcome negotiated by the parties.

On the eve of the 1991 Madrid peace conference, Secretary of State James Baker affirmed that "it continues to be U.S. policy that we do not support an independent Palestinian state." According to press reports, he made the same promise in a letter to the Israeli government. In 1993, the Oslo breakthrough led to U.S. relations with the PLO but not, at first, to any change in policy on Palestinian statehood. In congressional testimony in February 1994, Secretary of State Warren Christopher repeated that "the United States does not support a Palestinian state."

But that was the last time a senior U.S. official enunciated U.S. non-support for Palestinian statehood. Since then, U.S. officials have avoided any comment on "final status" issues, lest the U.S. position "prejudice the outcome of negotiations." In effect Washington was inching away from its previous position. Israel never protested, however, apparently satisfied with Washington's tacit commitment to recognize *only* an agreed outcome of negotiation, effectively giving the Israelis a veto.

Now that, too, has apparently changed. Four sets of comments by senior administration officials in May suggest that the administration may evince a strong *preference* for an agreed solution but that U.S. *policy* no longer rules out recognizing a unilateral declaration. And, in diplomacy, what's not ruled out is generally "ruled in."

On May 7, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton advocated the eventual establishment of a Palestinian "state" because it would be "in the long-term interests of the Middle East." Though she is not a foreign policy spokesperson, her words certainly carry some weight. Interestingly, there was no official retraction. While the White House spokesman noted that Mrs. Clinton was not speaking for the administration, neither he nor any other U.S. official took issue with the substance of her remarks.

On May 18, during the annual convention of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Martin Indyk was asked publicly whether the United States would recognize a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood if Arafat were to make one in May 1999, the expiration date of Oslo's interim period. Indyk replied:

> Unilateral declarations are not helpful to the process. These issues are issues that the parties agreed would be dealt with in the final status negotiations. That's the way the parties should deal with them. We will insist that they do that. And what's important now is to get those final status negotiations going, so that these kinds of issues can be resolved there.

While Indyk's remark did firmly restate the U.S. preference (even "insistence") for a negotiated solution, it was also not a definitive "no." Later that same evening, Vice President Al Gore also spoke to AIPAC, emphasizing the U.S. preference, not policy:

> Let me make clear our position, which has not changed. First, the question of the status of the West Bank and Gaza is an extremely complex issue, which Israel and the Palestinians have agreed should be discussed and resolved by direct negotiations. Second, this issue, like the others reserved for permanent status talks, can only be settled through negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Finally, it is our view that unilateral actions and statements by the parties concerning these issues are not helpful to the environment necessary for making peace.

So far, the potential for U.S. recognition could only be deduced by reading between the lines of the Gore and Indyk comments. At the May 28 White House briefing, however, presidential spokesman Michael McCurry brought the issue into the open. Queried about U.S. policy toward a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood, he replied that the United States would "most likely not join it." When a reporter asked McCurry to explain whether his comment meant "there's a possibility we would recognize the state," McCurry did not say "no." Rather, he described such a declaration only as "contrary to the process that the two parties have divined for themselves" and as a "step that would

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move in the wrong direction." Pressed again for a "flat-out" response, McCurry declined, saying, "It's a moot point because there's no pending declaration."

Given that no corrections, elaborations, or retractions have been issued, this series of statements must be considered official U.S. policy. This new policy could be summed up as follows: The United States strongly prefers a negotiated outcome of final status issues between Israel and the Palestinians and will work to achieve that goal. However, if the two sides do not reach agreement by May 1999 and the Palestinians issue a unilateral declaration of statehood over Israeli objections, the U.S. may or may not recognize that state.

If this is indeed de facto policy, the question is: Why? It could be that the United States has made a strategic shift—that it has changed its view of the desirability of Palestinian statehood. Or the shift could be merely tactical: The U.S. view regarding statehood has not changed, but the administration believes its new formulation helps the peace process, either by compensating Arafat for accepting the American plan on "further redeployments" or by giving the U.S. leverage over Israel.

Finally, the new language could represent a nod to the inevitable. With Israeli leaders publicly debating the merits of statehood, U.S. officials may have concluded that, in some form, it is an idea whose time has come. And, given Arab and European leaders' criticism of Washington's "lack of credibility" in Middle East policy, the administration may believe it would suffer acute embarrassment if Israel ultimately accepted the concept of Palestinian statehood before the U.S. did.

Whatever its rationale, this new policy is unduly risky. Seven years ago the U.S. decision to prohibit open PLO participation in Madrid was correct because it affirmed that Israel was where the Palestinians should seek redress of their claims; Oslo was the eventual result. Today, as the parties approach final status, the same logic applies. Washington's policy on statehood will help determine whether Arafat's diplomacy is channeled toward accommodation with Israel (and, not improbably, a negotiated agreement to establish a Palestinian state) or toward confronting Israel with a fait accompli. Opening the door to recognition only makes unilateralism more likely. Why promote brinkmanship without a compelling reason?

For now, the Israeli political class is focused on the imminent decision on a "further redeployment" on the West Bank. Netanyahu has reportedly asked the administration for a side letter committing itself to not recognizing a unilateral declaration of statehood, but this hasn't been a centerpiece of the current negotiations.

One person who undoubtedly has noticed is Yasir Arafat. The U.S. position on statehood may not be the decisive factor in Arafat's calculus, but it is certainly important. At the least, the U.S.'s public posture will be critical to providing Washington with the cover to play its vital "honest broker" role in the months leading up to May 1999. That is when deft diplomacy almost surely will be needed either to reach an Israeli-Palestinian final status accord or, more likely, some form of agreement to extend Oslo's interim period.

All it would take to fix the problem is one sentence from the White House: *The United States will recognize any agreed outcome of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and only an agreed outcome of negotiations.* But that is a statement the administration has so far, for some unknown reason, declined to make.

ROBERT SATLOFF is the executive director of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

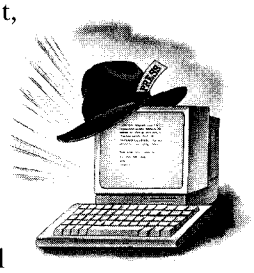
BOSTON DISPATCH

BEANTOWN BEDLAM

By Michael Crowley

Boston has always been a fiercely proud town: proud of its noble revolutionary history, its venerable sports teams, its world-class universities. It even clings to a dazzlingly hubristic nickname conceived by Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. over a century ago: "The Hub"—as in "The Hub of the Universe."

And then there is the city's pride about its seat in the House of Representatives, routinely described here as the most historic in the nation. That pride has been overflowing since the seat's current occupant, Joe Kennedy, announced his retirement this spring, signaling the first race for this storied job since 1986. While Bostonians may overstate the cosmic significance of the Red Sox and Celtics, there's a pretty strong case for the grandeur of representing the Massachusetts eighth congressional district, which includes most of Boston as well as Cambridge, Somerville, and several other nearby towns. For 34 years it was the seat of legendary House Speaker Tip O'Neill. Before him it was John F. Kennedy's, and before him it belonged to the infamous "Rascal King" James Michael Curley. "Residents of the eighth district should scour the landscape for a successor worthy of the seat," huffed *The Boston Globe.* The district's "history argues for formidable candidates now."



No fewer than a dozen candidates have declared themselves worthy, many of them earnest local pols with impressive credentials. But one wonders whether the two front-runners are quite what the *Globe* had in mind. They are Ray Flynn, a once-beloved icon now at the ragged end of his political career, who recently went on

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"60 Minutes" to deny that he drinks too much; and Marjorie Clapprood, a former talk-radio host known for blonde-bombshell looks, rampant sexual innuendo, and a penchant for creating controversy. As their comparatively drab and obscure rivals like to point out, it's anybody's guess how Flynn or Clapprood would fare in a milieu of committees and quorums, nuclear proliferation and Social Security reform. But, for all this district's historic import, this year's race may come down to precisely the same element that propelled JFK and Curley: star power.

A rugged-faced Irish Catholic, Flynn is the better known of the two. Elected mayor of Boston in 1983, he was extolled for his accessibility and the progress he made toward racial peace. But, while he was off serving as U.S. ambassador to the Vatican from 1993 to 1997, an investigation into missing funds from his mayoral campaign landed one former top aide in jail for embezzlement and another for corruption. (Flynn was not charged.) Upon returning to Boston last summer, he endured an all-too-public job search, which hit bottom when he was rejected for the post of athletic director at Northeastern University. When Joe Kennedy backed off a gubernatorial bid, Flynn declared his own candidacy for the job—a hopelessly low-budget crusade that few noticed.

Until October. That's when the *Globe* hammered Flynn with a front-page trashing of his performance in Rome that finally put into print the long-standing rumors about Flynn's purported boozing. The article's most devastating details came from a *Globe* editor who had personally seen Flynn last summer, apparently drunk on a busy street at six o'clock in the evening, "walking unsteadily and slurring his speech." Another witness told of seeing a soused Flynn in a bar, publicly "babbling that he doesn't return President Clinton's phone calls. And he held two fingers together and said, 'Me and the Pope are like this....'" Flynn, who denies any drinking problem and most details of the story, quickly whipped out the class card. Elitists at the *Globe*, he said, don't "understand working-class people going into a barroom, and having a beer, and talking to working-class people."

The counterattack couldn't save Flynn's gubernatorial bid, but it did enable him to survive for the congressional run. Thanks to his near-universal name recognition, plus a faithful core of union men and blue-collar Catholics, Flynn leads with 21 percent in the race's first authoritative poll. It's not exactly a commanding majority, but it only takes a plurality to win. So with nine other Democrats running in the September 15 primary—which, in the country's most reliably Democratic district, is effectively the general election—a mere eleven percent of the vote could, in theory, be all it takes to follow in the footsteps of JFK.

Meanwhile, among handicappers, it is Marjorie Clapprood who remains the favorite. Clapprood is a hyperactive bleached blonde with long pink nails and mile-high heels who could be a mad scientist's cross between Joan Rivers and Geraldine Ferraro—or maybe a potty-mouthed, paleoliberal Susan Molinari. Clapprood spent six years as one of the state's best-known radio and television hosts, electrifying the airwaves with her musings on the female anatomy and various bodily functions. Her on-air exploits included an argument with Howard Stern over whether she would shed her panties for him. Then, there was the time she inquired of the super-hunk Fabio, "Do you have big private parts?" Equally loved and hated for her shtick, Clapprood is no political novice: She served three terms as a state representative and was the Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor in 1990. (Clapprood was the running mate of the crotchety Boston University president, John Silber, prompting *The Boston Herald* to describe the ticket as "Dr. Doom and Va-va-va-voom.")

On the stump, Clapprood is prone to screwball statements ("Newt the toot! I'm gonna go booga-booga in his face!") and she doesn't wade very deeply into policy. But, far from dodging her entertainment career, she uses it to argue that only she can raise the required hell in a GOP Congress. "I don't just want to be a vote," Clapprood says. "I want to really kick some ass."

A candidates' forum at a dreary senior center in the Boston neighborhood of Allston last month was emblematic of the race so far. One by one, the lesser-knowns struggled to stake out detailed policy positions. But, when the moderator asked Flynn about public housing, he sidestepped it to talk about how he's the proud father of six hard-working kids. Clapprood dealt with an economics question by cheerily noting that the forum "gave me a chance to meet some candidates that I didn't even know were running," ticking off pat talking points, and then closing in a Ricki Lake sing-song: "Invite me ba-ack! I love you!"

In this liberal Eden, the candidates are in lockstep on most issues. Newt Gingrich and tax cuts—bad. Gay rights and affordable housing—good. (Flynn's pro-life Catholicism makes for one crucial exception. Some say it dooms him; others argue that in a close race his monopoly on the anti-abortion vote could be pivotal.) With so little debate over issues, personality fills the vacuum, much to the consternation of Flynn and Clapprood's opponents. George Bachrach, a nerdy former state senator, cracks sardonically that he and Clapprood were separated at birth. Former state representative Susan Tracy, who once worked for Flynn, likes to talk not-so-subtly about the "freshness and newness" of her candidacy when asked about him.

Of course, several other candidates may yet shake up the race, including a pair of millionaires and the hard-scrabble Italian mayor of Somerville. (The district is more than ten percent Italian-American.) And an endorsement from Joe Kennedy himself could rocket anybody to the top. After all, even in the country's most historic district, there's no commodity more valuable than a famous name.

MICHAEL CROWLEY covers politics for *The Boston Phoenix*.

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SAN FRANCISCO POSTCARD

SIM CITY

By Romesh Ratnesar

San Franciscans should be worried these days. The city's biggest and most trusted financial institution, Bank of America, announced in April that as part of a merger it was relocating its corporate headquarters to North Carolina. The charismatic but imperious mayor, Willie Brown, surrounds himself with a phalanx of bodyguards and talks seriously about using heat-seeking helicopters to find out where the homeless hide in Golden Gate Park. The two people who did so much to infuse the city with its endearingly quirky spirit—Herb Caen and Jerry Garcia—are dead. Despite the booming economy, the city has one of America's worst homeless problems. And, thanks to El Niño, it's been raining all year.

But scour the city on any given day and you probably won't find a whole lot of concerned locals—partly because San Franciscans maintain a generally self-satisfied demeanor and mainly because, on most days, there aren't many locals around. The population of the city still doubles during working hours, but the real movers in the Bay Area are seeking their fortunes on the Peninsula, in high-tech centers like Palo Alto, Mountain View, and San Mateo. And, while San Francisco remains the fastest-growing county in the Bay Area, that's because the fastest-growing group within San Francisco is the contingent of young, rich techies who have moved into the city's hippest neighborhoods, all the while working in Silicon Valley offices as far as 50 miles south. All of this is changing the City by the Bay from the cradle of counterculture to a cybergeek suburb.

The signs are everywhere. In Potrero Hill, a once-desolate neighborhood filled with drab shabby warehouses, espresso bars and martini lounges have sprouted to accommodate the swarms of high-tech mavens flocking there, drawn by the neighborhood's close proximity to the freeways. Other neighborhoods—like the Marina, a quiet waterside district formerly dominated by middle-class families—have been overrun by high-living, single twentysomethings. The Marina's main commercial drag, Chestnut Street, has become a yuppie strip mall: in a five-block span, there are close to 40 chain stores and restaurants. You can still catch the whiff of marijuana in the Haight-Ashbury district, but you can also now browse at the Gap. (Remember, Kerouac wore khakis.) "San Francisco," grumbles Candace Tavernas, a 27-year-old Marina resident, "is becoming a suburb of Palo Alto."

Tavernas should know: Each day she makes a two-hour round-trip commute to her job as a programmer at Netscape Communications outside Palo Alto. And she's not alone. The number of people heading south on commuter trains out of the city has doubled since 1992. According to *The Metropolitan*, a San Francisco weekly, southbound morning traffic on Highway 101 and Interstate 280 has swelled dramatically in the last five years; between 1995 and 1996, one bottleneck between San Mateo and South San Francisco shot up from twenty-seventh to ninth among the most congested stretches in the Bay Area. Marc Escobosa, 24, lives on San Francisco's Russian Hill but travels to work at a software start-up in Redwood City, 45 miles away. "When you drive down 101 in the morning, there are as many cars leaving the city as coming in," he says. About two-thirds of the way through his commute, traffic grinds to a halt; that's where the hordes of software designers and engineers heading to work at Oracle Corporation's mammoth complex get off. "I have to spend an extra twelve minutes in my car because the Oracle exit has stopped all four lanes," he says.

True, commuters across the country endure similar hardships, but the journey usually goes in the opposite direction: from outlying residential areas to urban, industrial centers. The high-tech industry, however, grew up outside the city, in the flatlands of the South Bay, where land is abundant enough to furnish the industry's sprawl. But it's still a boring place to live. "Silicon Valley reflects the food they serve at technology firms during the lunch hour," says novelist Po Bronson, a chronicler of Valley zeitgeist. "It has to be just interesting enough that it doesn't make you want to leave the office park and get a real meal, but it's not so exciting that you want to sit there for a long time and eat a big meal." Adds Escobosa: "All the places you can rent look the same—it feels like you're a number. But, in San Francisco, who knows? You might find a roommate who does aromatherapy."

If tech-heads prefer San Francisco for its culture and undulating elegance, San Francisco prefers them because they're rich. San Franciscans have the second-highest disposable income in the country, due in no small part to the fact that the average annual salary in Silicon Valley is $75,000. Not surprisingly, housing costs in the city have skyrocketed. A one-bedroom rental apartment, on average, costs more than $1,400 per month, up 30 percent since 1996. And yet demand is insatiable: the vacancy rate in the city is estimated to be as low as 0.5 percent. As more young techies cash in their stock options and move into San Francisco, middle-class and low-income residents will likely feel the squeeze even more. A ballot measure that would have lifted rent and eviction controls was defeated in June, but close to 40 percent of voters supported it—not bad in a city whose very name is associated with left-liberalism.

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DOWJONES

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Which brings us to the effect all these cyberkids are having on the city's politics. Over the last few decades, a progressive coalition of minorities, gays, upscale white liberals, and unions has ruled city politics. In recent times, it has done battle with an ascendant group of conservative, middle-class homeowners who live in the city's western outskirts and who got law-and-order candidate Frank Jordan elected as mayor in 1991. Both sides have entrenched political machines and interests; and they don't welcome newcomers.

And besides it's not clear what kind of political animals the high-tech crowd will turn out to be. Because most Valley workers spend the majority of their time at the office, their connections to community issues and local politics in San Francisco are tenuous. Escobosa says he was familiar with most of the measures on the June ballot, "but I didn't feel a major vested interest in any of them." A case in point: In the June election, a $90 million bond measure to keep the fading de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park failed for the second time to win the necessary two-thirds approval. "This group may be more inward-looking, more about solving what's on their front doorsteps," says pollster Paul Maslin. "They won't have the same institutional memory. The de Young is an old landmark, but a lot of people don't know that."

It's enough to make native San Franciscans, who cherish the city's brand of tie-dyed liberalism and its sense of quaintness, a bit doleful. But wait. The new high-tech gang isn't all bad. Take Bob Skinner: At 29, he makes $98,000 a year as a software engineer in Silicon Valley, but he also volunteers for the Presidio Alliance, a group devoted to preserving the historic former military base. (Perhaps not surprisingly, one of Skinner's contributions was to help build the alliance's website.) Like most under-30 techies, he is open-minded and well-informed. Though a Democrat, he doesn't hew to a party line. "I definitely track the issues and vote," he says, "but I vote pragmatically."

That reflects a citywide turn. Though city politicians like Brown still insist on all manner of wacky behavior—witness last year's sadomasochism birthday party thrown for Brown adviser Jack Davis—everyone else seems to be getting more sensible. In the June election, San Francisco's choices in two major contests—the race for governor and Proposition 226—more or less mirrored those of all California voters. "San Francisco is entering a much less dramatic phase in its political life," says Maslin. "We've had this tremendous crescendo, starting with Kerouac and the counterculture; then came the tremendous rise of the gay population; and then the counterreaction of the 1980s. Things now are getting a little more prosaic, a little less dramatic—it's still quirky and interesting and sometimes bizarre, but San Francisco may have a future that's a little more normal than the past." All of which means that San Francisco is starting to resemble the rest of America. Nothing wrong with that.

ROMESH RATNESAR is a writer-reporter for *Time* magazine.

How Indonesia's Chinese can survive.

MINORITY RULES

By Jonathan Paris

When I first came to Southeast Asia in 1980 as a young international lawyer, I was struck by the fact that all but one of the companies borrowing from our large U.S. banking client in Jakarta were owned by Chinese Indonesians. In fact, much of the Indonesian economy was and still is dominated by fewer than 50 ethnic Chinese business groups, known as "conglomerates." Perhaps even more startling is the almost total absence of ethnic Chinese in any other sector of society such as the government or the army. In essence, the ethnic Chinese put all of their eggs in the economic basket—relying on an alliance with Suharto, the strongman, to protect them against a seemingly inevitable backlash from native Indonesians resentful of their wealth.

That backlash finally came this spring. Why didn't Indonesia's ethnic Chinese see it coming? After trying in vain back in the '80s and early '90s to convince the Chinese conglomerates that U.S. real estate might prove a safer haven for their assets, I came to the conclusion that the ethnic Chinese preferred the short-term high profits of familiar Indonesian investments over the security and reasonable returns provided by U.S. ones. Political risk just didn't register with them.

When the revolution finally occurred, ethnic-Chinese-

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owned office buildings, banks, and shopping centers all over Indonesia went up in smoke. Ethnic Chinese homes and shops were looted; ethnic Chinese women were pulled off buses and brutally raped. If the Indonesian Chinese are to avoid still further violence, they must learn the lesson of this latest outbreak: namely that there is no godfather who can or will protect them indefinitely. There can be no real economic security without a political system based on the rule of law. And that system will require the political participation of all Indonesians—including ethnic Chinese.

This will also require the Chinese to break with centuries-old habits whose origins lie in Indonesia's colonial history. When the Dutch colonists arrived in Indonesia in the seventeenth century, they quickly liquidated the local merchants and encouraged Chinese to settle in the Dutch East Indies to conduct commerce. For generations the Chinese lived *in* Indonesia but were not *of* Indonesia. The Dutch colonists mandated one law with separate courts for the Dutch and Westerners, a second separate judicial system for the Chinese, and a third, governed by *adat*, or customary law, for native Indonesians.

Of course, despite having been favored by the Dutch, the vast majority of the seven million descendants of these Chinese transplants (less than five percent of the total population) are not wealthy. Apart from the tycoons, most ethnic Chinese are shopkeepers in small towns and villages who are well-to-do only relative to their poorer neighbors. And, during the ideological struggle in the '50s and '60s waged fiercely between Communist and Muslim peasants, many poor Chinese joined the Indonesian Communist Party. They paid for it dearly following the failed coup of 1965, after which hundreds of thousands of Indonesians were killed.

After the coup General Suharto set a pattern for governance that remained pretty much in place until the May 1998 revolution. Not unlike the Dutch, Suharto gave special economic access and political protection to the ethnic Chinese in return for partnership in Chinese business empires. I can still remember eating dinner in the early 1980s at a tawdry outdoor restaurant in Jakarta's Chinatown. A wealthy Chinese Indonesian and I were joined by a four-star general in a BMW limo; we ate with our hands. The dinner, I suspected, was a ceremony to seal some business partnership with the general.

This grand bargain between the ethnic Chinese and the military is a key to understanding the repressive dynamics of Suharto's New Order. The only two constituencies that mattered to Suharto were the military, which ran the political sphere, and the business community, which was dominated by the Chinese. There was no need for civil institutions, a free press, or even native entrepreneurs, except for Suharto's family and cronies.

Yet tensions were clearly building within Indonesian society long before the currency collapse in 1997. Dewi Fortuna Anwar, a political scientist and close adviser to President B.J. Habibie, Suharto's successor, told me over two years ago that the political empowerment of the middle class was held back by the grand bargain. Whereas, in other rapidly developing countries, the economic gains of the middle class translate into political demands, in Indonesia, the ethnic Chinese received the preponderance of economic gains without laying any claim to a political voice. The inherent narrowness of this bargain led to both Suharto's undoing and the vicious anti-Chinese riots in 1998.

Anti-Chinese sentiment has also been fueled by religious differences. Eighty-seven percent of Indonesians are Muslim. But, although many ethnic Chinese have lived in Indonesia for generations and speak Bahasa Indonesia, the country's official language, and have adopted Islamic-sounding names, the vast majority of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese never converted. Even their homes and above-ground cemeteries are still conspicuously separate.

This has provided fodder for demagogues seeking a scapegoat for Indonesia's problems. In January Islamic officials, encouraged by certain manipulative generals, started calling the Indonesian Chinese "rats" and "traitors"; it was only a matter of time before the two potent forces of racial hatred and economic jealousy combusted in a widespread—and largely premeditated—rampage against the Chinese.

Whatever the drawbacks of Suharto's rule, he had managed to create an ideology that mandated tolerance of different religions and ethnicities under a unitary, secular Indonesian identity. Events this year suggest that the removal of that soothing security blanket (not to mention the raw coercion of Suharto's New Order) does not bode well for Indonesia's Chinese.

Certainly their immediate prospects are bleak. Under the status quo, President Habibie may manage to remain in power through elections held sometime in 1999. He can try to ride the wave of populist sentiment that wants to rid Indonesia of nepotism, cronyism, and corruption. As chairman of the Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals since the early 1990s, Habibie is in an ideal position to ally himself with mass-based Islamic sentiment. To accommodate such sentiment for both reform and retribution, Habibie will purge the system of the Suharto children and those Chinese tycoons who have been linked to the Suharto family businesses like Mohamad "Bob" Hasan, the plywood king and golfing partner of Suharto.

Beyond these obvious and symbolic targets, Habibie is likely to try to restrain popular sentiment against the ethnic Chinese because the latter are key to economic recovery. However, it is also possible that the student- and worker-led pressures for political reform, propelled by social fallout from economic devastation, will compel early elections. This sounds great on the surface, but it will be difficult for Indonesia's shriveled civil society to assume its place in a democracy so quickly. A less democratically minded leader could step into the vacuum.

One figure who does appear to be democratically minded is Amien Rais, the head of the 28 million mem-

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ber Islamic organization, Muhammadiyah, and the first to call for Suharto's resignation after the economic crisis began. Over the past weeks Rais has given off some encouraging signals. He displayed statesmanship in calling off the "million man" march on the tense day before Suharto resigned, after the generals warned that there would be a repeat of the Tiananmen massacre. He has also toned down his earlier anti-Chinese, anti-Christian rhetoric, and has disavowed remarks he made while a graduate student of political science at the University of Chicago that Jewish control over America is something he wanted to prevent the Chinese from achieving in Indonesia. But it remains to be seen what Rais might say in a campaign for election and what he would do if he attains power.

There would certainly be plenty of pressure to take an anti-Chinese stance. Already editorials appearing in the (increasingly free) press are calling on authorities to evict ethnic Chinese from Indonesia and take over their businesses. This irresponsible journalism, echoed by some members of parliament, resonates among populist elements who have little appreciation for the critical role Chinese-owned businesses will have to play in the country's economic recovery. Of course, the army may choose to take power before control passes to Rais or anyone else. But the army is currently split between the "Greens," who want to see a greater role for Islam, and those who, like its present leader General Wiranto, see Islam as a threat to Indonesian unity.

Under any of these scenarios, the transition to democracy in Indonesia is likely to be messy and especially harsh for the Chinese. This makes it all the more crucial that they shed their political reticence and start pushing for the establishment of a democratic system based on the rule of law. The good news is that some Indonesian Chinese are finally attempting to do just that. There's even a new political party for Indonesian Chinese. Its organizer, Ponijan Liaw, recently proclaimed that the vast majority of ethnic Chinese are not "economic animals." He should join forces with students and liberal leaders like Emil Salim, a former minister who ran against Habibie for vice president last March and who has said that ethnic Chinese should be allowed to become bureaucrats, join the army, and carry identity cards which identify them as merely Indonesian—as opposed to the current ones that note their Chinese ancestry. The international community can also help out by making sure Indonesian leaders appreciate how detrimental any further attacks on ethnic Chinese would be to Indonesia's economic recovery.

Finally, the overseas Chinese community should stand up and denounce recent episodes of rioting, raping, and scapegoating. The murky and exaggerated notion of Indonesian-Chinese influence arising from the 1996 Lippo-Riady Democratic Party campaign-financing scandal appears to have silenced Chinese-Americans. They need to say loudly and clearly that anti-Chinese pogroms have no role in countries that wish to be a part of the global community. Otherwise, the ugly episodes of this year may be repeated. •

Taking Kasich seriously.

HONEST JOHN

By Jonathan Chait

"I am prepared to vote for my first Republican, John Kasich," read a letter to *The New York Times Magazine* in May. "I have the impression that he favors no-nonsense politics, equity for the common man, and fiscal restraint, a rare combination in this politically combative era." The letter-writer, Michael Pivarnik of Indiana, Pennsylvania, received this impression from reading a *Times Magazine* profile of Kasich written by R.W. Apple Jr. Kasich, the article explained, has hardscrabble roots, having grown up in a small town called McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, where he acquired "a populist's sympathy for the little guy."

But you didn't have to read the *Times* profile to acquire an appreciation for Kasich's down-home virtue—indeed it's been the theme of nearly everything that has been written about him. A profile in *George* revealed that Kasich "places his trust in the human heart, not in the corridors of power," and that "he has not lost faith in the basic bucket-brigade goodness of Americans, the binding energy that infused towns like McKees Rocks." A *New Yorker* profile from last year reported that Kasich's inspiration to fight for balanced budgets came at a gas station in his adopted hometown of Columbus, Ohio, when "a stranger at the next pump said, 'Hey, Kasich, why don't you stop complaining and do something about it?'" From this tale we were supposed to infer several things: Kasich is humble enough

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not to mind when constituents brusquely call out his last name; his views on the issues derive from the people; and he even pumps his own gas.

Eventually, if you read enough of Kasich's press clippings, they begin to blend together in a gauzy haze of apple-pie bromides. John Kasich is charming, energetic, and boyishly handsome. He is deeply religious yet without a trace of sanctimony. He is a plainspoken regular guy who believes in honest budgetary discipline. He listens to rock music and wears goofy ties.

The appeal of Kasich isn't intellectual; it's characterological. "I'm not anti-government," he has written. "I'm a blue-collar kid from McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania." It's as if any question about his views could be answered with an affirmation of his identity. Or, as another flattering Kasich profile—in *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*—began, "This is all you need to know about U.S. Rep. John Kasich: His ex-wife's mother votes for him." This is how you should size up a blind date for your sister, not the chairman of the House Budget Committee and an all-but-announced candidate for president.

One of John Kasich's assets is a heartland accent that's just strong enough to convey working-class authenticity. When he talks to you, he maintains eye contact and regularly pauses to repeat your first name in a Dale Carnegie way, even if he just learned it. When he senses disagreement, he is quick to point out that he is interested in your input.

But Kasich does not owe his popularity solely to his folksiness. After coming to Congress in 1982, he built a reputation as a principled advocate of fiscal rectitude. He put a higher priority on deficit reductions than on tax cuts, and he insisted that any tax cuts be "paid for" with spending cuts. This infuriated supply-side conservatives—the Reagan acolytes who believe that tax cuts are always good and that they should not be contingent upon spending cuts. The supply-siders have a rich vocabulary of derisive terms to describe Republicans who think otherwise—"green eyeshades," "castor oil," etc.—and they have applied many of them to Kasich. "He became a bean counter, deficit hawk, spending cutter," recalls Lawrence Kudlow, an economist for American Skandia Life Insurance and a leading supply-sider.

And, in fact, Kasich's political courage sometimes bordered on the masochistic. During the budget negotiations that followed the Republican takeover of Congress, Kasich insisted that any budget deal be based on economic assumptions used by the Congressional Budget Office rather than the slightly more optimistic projections of the White House's Office of Management and Budget. This seemingly obscure technical dispute was immensely important: The CBO calculation of slower economic growth entailed billions more in spending cuts in order to eliminate the budget deficit. So, in effect, Kasich was making it more difficult for the Republicans to reach their balanced budget nirvana.

Some of Kasich's crusades have even won the support of Democrats. And not just congenitally bipartisan Southern Democrats: Honest-to-goodness lefties liked Kasich, too. He joined Berkeley Representative Ron Dellums in trying to defund the B-2 bomber—which several government studies exposed as nearly useless—despite heavy lobbying by contractors. He also formed a coalition spanning from Ralph Nader to Grover Norquist to denounce "corporate welfare," or government subsidies that benefit business.

Kasich's opposition to corporate welfare has a famously quixotic quality—he is like a John Grisham hero without the law degree, bravely confronting the forces of corporate greed. Not surprisingly, it is the central narrative of the iconography that has grown around him. But only part of the story is widely known, and the rest of that tale is a good place to begin understanding Kasich.

When the GOP opened the 103rd Congress in 1995, Kasich had responsibility for drawing up the budget for the House of Representatives. This meant finding hundreds of billions of dollars in budgetary savings to eliminate the deficit and cut taxes. In order to head off Democratic complaints that the GOP was gutting benefits for the poor and middle class in order to benefit the wealthy, Kasich instructed the Ways and Means Committee to find $25 billion in savings over seven years from breaks for business in the tax code—a move that drew widespread plaudits.

But Kasich couldn't *require* the committee to make the cuts he wanted. The final word belonged to the chairman, Bill Archer, who does not exactly hew to the Naderite position on corporate welfare. ("There's no such thing," he said at the time.) Archer decided to find savings from other sources. For instance, Archer proposed to liberalize rules that govern when and how corporations could take money from employee pension funds. Through clever accounting, this did indeed raise revenue—since companies would have to pay taxes on whatever they withdrew—but it was a net benefit for business, not a sacrifice. This was typical of Archer's corporate welfare "cuts." Yet Kasich not only cooperated, he boldly declared that the Republicans had proven their sincere interest in shared sacrifice. "This is a message to people who work on assembly lines and in convenience stores that everyone has given," he proclaimed. Even today, Kasich points to this episode as a victory over corporate welfare. "Bill Archer went along," he told me. (President Clinton eventually vetoed the bill.)

Since then, Kasich's anti-corporate-welfare zealotry has seemed to wane. In May of this year, Kasich again devised the House Republicans' budget, giving him an opportunity to present his vision of government in its purest incarnation. This time, the budget contained not a dollar of cuts in corporate subsidies. Kasich is no doubt sincere in his opposition to corporate welfare. Genuine conservatives believe that, when the government extends preferential treatment to certain businesses, it violates free market principles. But, as his bid for the White House approaches, the cost of holding

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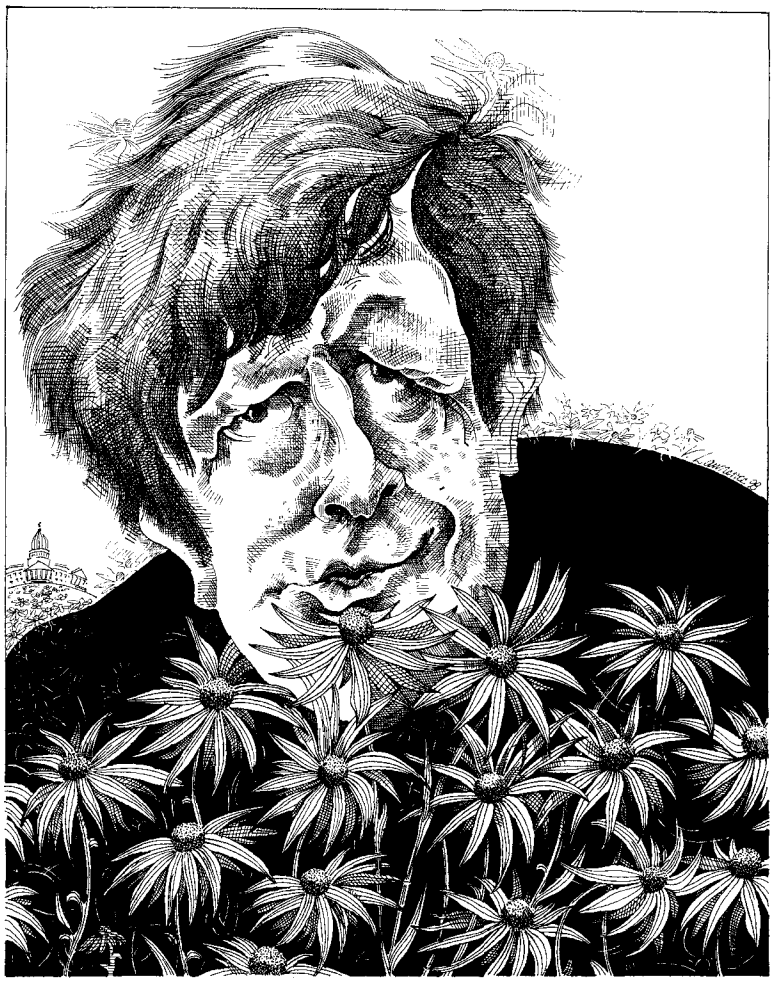
to principle has risen. "We [Republicans] are divided internally," Kasich explained to me a bit sheepishly. "It takes a long time to get rid of anything."

Meanwhile Kasich displayed no such restraint when it came to trimming the other, more traditional kind of welfare. His May budget launched an assault on spending programs that benefit low-income earners. Kasich proposed tens of billions of dollars in new spending cuts focused mainly on the poorest beneficiaries. More than half of his entitlement cuts came from means-tested programs that mostly benefit low-income persons, even though these constitute less than a quarter of all entitlement spending. He proposed cutting Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, the block grant to states that replaced welfare two years ago. He proposed cutting food stamps for people on workfare and eliminating the Earned Income Tax Credit for workers without children, a tax break for low-income workers. Kasich, in other words, planned to raise taxes on the working poor.



JOHN KASICH BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

This is not such a shocking thing to find in a Republican budget. But, remember, Kasich "is no country club Republican," as the *Times* put it. This is the kid from McKees Rocks, who last year said, "I'm really concerned about the growing differences between rich and poor in this country." Indeed, even many Republicans found Kasich's cuts hard to stomach, and they forced him to withdraw his budgetary blueprint almost immediately. Here is where the archetypal Kasich would have drawn up another set of spending cuts, a bold plan that attacked corporate welfare and spared no one. And here is what Kasich actually did: nothing. Well, not exactly nothing. He still demanded $100 billion in spending cuts. He just didn't say what he thought they should be. Kasich left it up to other House committees to figure out the details.

It was a curious retreat for a man so famous for his willingness to slay sacred cows in the budget. Yet it is fast becoming a pattern. As Kasich's presidential campaign cranks up, he has come to see the virtues of the fiscal free lunches that he once so famously refused to abide. The only reason this drift has gone undetected is that it has largely manifested itself in the byzantine realm of budgetary scoring rules.

The great triumph of the budget hawks came in 1990, when President Bush and the Democratic Congress agreed to a set of rules designed to thwart profligacy. One of those rules says that, when Congress adopts a particular spending increase or tax cut, it must offset that with a spending cut or tax hike of equal value. This means that the budget surplus cannot "pay for" new spending or tax cuts. One might question the efficacy of this restraint, but it makes perfect sense to the budget hawks of the world. Any new drain on federal revenue is permanent, they reason, while the surplus is temporary. Therefore, using the surplus to offset new spending would create future budget deficits when the surplus runs dry. Kasich now wants to subvert the rule, so he can divvy up the surplus into personal retirement accounts—a check every American can put in the bank. (Just call it your Kasich Account and remember to vote in 2000.)

Another of the 1990 budget rules forbids Congress from paying for new spending programs or tax cuts by cutting discretionary spending, which is the general pot of money that funds items as varied as the IRS, the Coast Guard, and Head Start. Since Congress doles out its discretionary budget every year, cutting future discretionary spending is a political free ride—all you have to do is promise that future Congresses will spend less, without saying how. And so, sensibly, the rules forbid this cop-out. If you want to give somebody money, you have to identify who is going to pay for it—not just next year but for as long as the program or tax cut lasts. Now Kasich has quietly proposed to gut this limitation, too.

Elsewhere Kasich increasingly resembles the supply-side Republicans from whom he once distinguished himself. The Republican leadership is beginning to rail against the CBO, mainly because its economic forecasts

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do not assume that tax cuts will have magical effects on economic growth, as supply-siders have long claimed. Newt Gingrich has even angrily threatened to defund the office. Yet, while Kasich three years ago threatened to shut down the government rather than permit even the slightest deviation from the CBO's word, he, too, is now beginning to disparage the orthodoxy of fiscal prudence.

Naturally, supply-siders who once eyed Kasich warily are now singing his praises. "He is evolving now into more of a tax cutter," says Kudlow, who is also advising Kasich. But Kasich, who has Kudlow's book on prominent display in his office, insists his newfound affection for supply-siders isn't really new at all. As he explained to me, all that talk about balancing the budget was "a good rallying cry." It "reminded us of the larger effort to shrink government." How does he account for the newfound affinity between him and the GOP's voodoo-economics wing? "I'm not evolving," he explains. "They're evolving toward me." Indeed, it is not exactly true that Kasich has abandoned his ideals. He has always believed in cutting the deficit, in cutting taxes, and in looking out for the little guy. The trouble is that these objectives often collide with one another and that some of them have proven more politically feasible—or expedient—than others.

And so, as Kasich embarks upon his presidential candidacy, there is little in his incipient platform to suggest much disagreement with fellow Republicans or, for that matter, with anybody else. His stump speech, which he has already begun to deliver, is a medley of pleasant aphorisms.

Kasich compares his mission as president to that of Theodore Roosevelt—not coincidentally, a Republican icon who appeals to both conservatives and liberals. Just as Roosevelt attacked private monopolies, Kasich says, the next big task is to break up the public monopolies, which he identifies as Social Security, education, welfare, job training, and public housing. It is an agreeable-sounding formulation—instead of abandoning the government's responsibility, Kasich just wants to give the consumer more choices. But none of these programs is a monopoly in anything like the Rooseveltian sense. We already have private pensions, private schools, private charity, employer-sponsored job training, and private housing. (And private housing already accepts vouchers financed by taxpayer dollars, which allow recipients to live in private apartments on the federal dime.) This is a rhetorical conceit, not a plan of action.

And this is the point. The political advantage of attacking government monopolies—rather than attacking government itself—lies in its vagueness. Kasich's audiences can imagine for themselves what he means. A conservative might hear in this the promise of a heroic assault upon the federal leviathan. A moderate might discern nothing more threatening than an aggressive brand of reinventing government. Kasich understands that people will give his words a benign interpretation if they like him. His campaign style might almost be described as neo-Clintonism (which, at least in popular lore, is supposed to be the antithesis of Kasichism).

For example, Kasich praises the government's role in easing the Depression; he hails Medicare and civil rights legislation. But expanded government has become "frustrating," he explained in our interview, and now it is time to "make the government more effective." At one point, he assured me this does not mean rolling back the government, then later asserted his desire to "shrink government." Slightly confused, I asked what he thought the proper size of government ought to be. "That's a trick question," he objected.

Kasich has a second theme, too: Ordinary people must take on the moral responsibilities that we have entrusted to government. "All of us should be leaders," he says. Here he reprises almost precisely a theme articulated at one point or another by Bill Clinton, Colin Powell, and George Bush. Celebrating private generosity, which by definition lies beyond the control of public officials, has become a way to justify a lack of concrete solutions for societal ills. But, for Kasich, this theme is more than A Thousand Points of Light Lite. Talking about the character and values of ordinary people allows Kasich to hint at his own character and values. But the praise is implied, so the humbleness of the man is never in doubt.

Kasich reflects on civic virtue in his forthcoming book, *Courage is Contagious*. It recounts tales of individual heroism, like *Profiles in Courage*, only in prose so saccharine that it makes John F. Kennedy's encomia sound positively Menckenesque. ("We can all be heroes if we only have the courage to try," drips a typical sentence.) Also, Kasich extols private citizens instead of public figures. Aside from a series of demonically nettlesome bureaucrats who regularly emerge to burden the protagonists with preposterous regulations, federal officials do not appear in the book.

Except, of course, for a certain Ohio congressman, who finds his way into every story. In fact, the book's first chapter features a detailed account of how Kasich befriended two dying children, and it becomes clear that the hero of this passage is Kasich himself. "If I think about them hard, I cry at their loss," he writes. "When I see two bright stars twinkling side by side on an impossibly clear night, I see Bobby and Eric."

More typically, though, Kasich enters the story at the end, when he meets the protagonists to bask in their righteousness. The heroes invariably form a personal bond with him. ("I hugged my new friend. 'God bless you,' I told him.") We are meant to think of Kasich that way, too. His faith in the capacity of the American people to solve problems without government is literally an endorsement of each of us individually. It is the same idea employed by Mayor Quimby in "The Simpsons," who won reelection on the slogan, "If *you* were running for mayor, he'd vote for you." "Look man, I believe in you," Kasich told me, staring meaningfully into my eyes. I'd be more flattered if he knew me. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

A Mystery, A Romance

What will Hal Hartley do next? His first three films, *The Unbelievable Truth, Simple Men,* and *Trust,* established a Hartley style, somewhat derived from the abrupt simplicity of early Godard but nonetheless his own. Hartley presented his films in near-minimalist shots, a sort of rational Magritte, transforming petit-bourgeois Long Island into the occult. His stories and dialogue matched the visual effect, jolting the ordinary with ordinariness intensified and the extraordinary made credible.

His fourth feature, *Amateur,* was an unfortunate response to the French actress Isabelle Huppert, who had asked to make a film with him. It turned out to be as empty as Huppert's stoicism usually is. The next picture, *Flirt,* was a marking-time affair, three scenes of infidelity in three different countries—the sort of film that reveals a director's vacuity at the moment, along with his appeal not to forget him while his batteries recharge.

Now here's the next, **Henry Fool** (Sony Pictures Classics), a long piece that is back in Hartley territory on Long Island. It's a mystery—literally, not in terms of genre. It leaves us wondering what the point was. A parody? If so, of what? A few elements are reminiscent of earlier Hartley, but the surprises he found in the familiar have declined into grotesquerie, and little remains with us other than the grotesque.

The title character is a flâneur, smooth and persuasive, of about 30. (He says there was once an "e" on the end of his family name, which is a lame excuse for this neon tag and which is of no pertinence anyway. That's the whole film in miniature.) Henry rents the basement apartment in the Queens home of Simon Grim (yes, another tag). He is in his twenties and lives with his mother and his nymphomaniacal sister, Fay. Simon, slightly dim, is a garbage collector in a huge plant. The other Grims don't do anything for a living.

Henry, also unemployed, is writing his memoirs, which he says will be socially explosive. In addition to his writing, he takes on the governance of Simon's life. He reads some pages of a poem that Simon has written and urges him to quit his job and concentrate on the poem. Simon obliges. While this goes on, Fay makes moves on Henry who then has sex with her mother. Mom subsequently commits suicide. Simon's book-length poem is published enthusiastically, but the publisher declines Henry's memoirs.

Some five years pass. Henry and Fay are married and have a four-year-old boy. Simon wins the Nobel Prize for his poem but gives his passport (appropriately doctored) to Henry. At the finish, Henry is running for the Stockholm plane to accept the prize himself.

To this less than silken story, add a few data. Early on we learn that Henry is just out of prison, where he served a term for raping a 13-year-old girl, a matter of not much moment to him. Also early on, in a convenience store, Fay suddenly takes off her panties, pulls up her skirt, bends over, and calls out "Kiss my ass!" Someone forces Simon to attempt it, but he pukes over her bottom. Later, Henry bursts into the bathroom where Fay is showering, sits on the toilet and quite unmistakably uses it, during which Fay comes out of the shower wrapped in a towel. At first she protests his presence, but then kneels in front of the seated Henry and accepts what she mistakenly thinks is a marriage proposal.

If all this stuff occurred in a newcomer's film, it could be dismissed as a wearisome attempt to be an *enfant terrible.* But Hartley's first three films showed a jeweler's eye and the ear of a poetic anatomist; and these gifts are not completely missing from *Henry Fool.* So Hartley Past makes us wonder what Hartley Present is up to. He knows as well as we do that this new screenplay is nonsense and that some of his sequences are aggressively disgusting. But why? We keep trying to peer around the edge of the film, to see why it exists. The mystery remains.

Thomas Jay Ryan as Henry, James Urbaniak as Simon, and the mockingly piquant Parker Posey as Fay do well at supplying conviction for the things they are asked to say and do. Possibly they, like us, are curious about what Hartley will do next. Is *Henry Fool* merely marking time like *Flirt?* Or is it a further devolution? Hartley is still worth hoping about. So, hopefully. . . .

Is it really only 53 years since World War II? To a contemporary, time planes seem to have collapsed; that war sometimes seems to have receded out of memory into history. To see **The Land Girls** (Gramercy) is to have the sense of distance confirmed. That horrific war is now so

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Beyond Silence. *From Germany. A girl with normal hearing has two deaf parents. No tear-jerking, much sensitive acting and directing. (Reviewed 6/22/98)* **Bulworth.** *Warren Beatty cowrote, directed, and stars in this comedy about a senator who suddenly starts telling the truth—about race, particularly. A bit forced but generally sharp. (6/8/98)* **Passion in the Desert.** *Balzac's tale of a soldier in the Sahara and his strange encounter with a (female) leopard. Oddly credible. Exquisitely made. (7/6/98)* **The Truman Show.** *A man's entire life, unknown to him, is on TV. The real secret captives, however, are us. Plot glitches but very effective. (6/29/98)*—**SK**

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remote that a valentine about it is acceptable.

This British film centers on three young women in the Women's Land Army, a corps of over 20,000 who left whatever they were doing in 1939 and 1940 to work on farms, to replace farmers who had gone into the armed forces. The picture is a romance in Hawthorne's terms: the author of a romance, he says, must tell the truth but "has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances ... of the writer's own choosing.... He may bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich shadows." The screenplay, made from Angela Huth's novel by Keith Dewhurst and (the director) David Leland, fills the Hawthorne bill.

World War II was, it seems, an inconvenience, occasionally aggravated by a distant bombing raid or a German plane crashing in a nearby field or a fiancé's losing his legs in battle. But mostly the war was an occasion for rural adventure and character by-play and sexual itches. The three young women of the title are sent to work on a Dorset farm. The middle-aged farm couple—he of course is gruff with a heart of gold, she is an earth mother—have a husky son. He teaches the girls how to milk cows. Further teachings go on in bedrooms. And so on.

Still, the insidious truth is that the film is never boring and is sometimes moving, by dint of the girls' personalities and the national courage that, despite the roseate trappings, is frequently evoked. The three girls look somewhat alike—we need time to sort them out—but all are taking: Anna Friel, Catherine McCormack, and Rachel Weisz. Tom Georgeson, the farmer, Maureen O'Brien, his wife, and Steven Mackintosh, their son, fill their roles just as we want them filled in a romance.

One point that may puzzle American viewers. The farmer, working on his farm, wears a suit, a white shirt, and a tie. This isn't because of wartime shortages. Not many years ago I saw a gardener in England come to work every day in a vested suit, white shirt, and tie. The suit wasn't immaculate or the shirt notably white, but those were his work clothes. Not exceptional, I was told, which *The Land Girls* confirms. •

V. S. Naipaul's misunderstanding of Islam.

The Traveler's Luck

By Fouad Ajami

Some years ago, in *Finding the Centre*, V.S. Naipaul wrote of the impulse that sent him on the road to remote places. Always, he said, there was "the blankness and anxiety of arrival," the risk of "not finding anything, not getting started on the chain of accidents and encounters." He was a looker, he said, and he would follow his luck: "To arrive at a place without knowing anyone there, and sometimes without an introduction; to learn how to move among strangers for the short time one could afford to be among them; to hold oneself in constant readiness for adventure or revelation." There was "glamour" in travel; more importantly, travel took him out of his "colonial shell," it became a substitute for the "mature social experience" that his background had denied him.

By now, after forty years of writing and twenty-two books, after stamping in his own inimitable prose the great themes of the postcolonial world, we recognize with ease the Naipaulian art and sensibility, the Naipaulian themes and settings. After his chronicles in the Caribbean and Argentina and Africa and India and the lands of Islam, after his chronicles of exiles who scrape their countries clean and flee to Western lands but take the fire—and the panic—with them, the writer and his subjects have become inextricably linked: the "half-made societies" of the Third World, the "hustlers" of post-colonial politics, the Western sympathizers who go to revolutionary centers "with return air tickets," the promise of revolution making and unmaking those half- made societies.

And we know enough about the man himself, the writer moving among strangers, adding to his knowledge of the world, correcting for the limited world that was given him as a descendant of Indian migrants from the Gangetic plains born in a small island on the mouth of the great South American river,

Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples
by V. S. Naipaul
(Random House, 408 pp., $27.95)

the Orinoco, conceiving for himself a literary ambition beyond Trinidad, away from its stress and its smallness, away from the black power that "undid" that restricted world, and away from his own Indian community and its immemorial customs and phobias. "We read," Naipaul once wrote in a memorable essay on his great exemplar Conrad, "to find out what we already know." We read Naipaul in that way, too. We come to Naipaulian material prepared; not to be startled or surprised, not for the novelty but for the delicacy, the wondrous reworking, the circling yet again of the rich old terrain.

But there came a time, in the mid-1980s, when Naipaul wearied of the politics and the obsessive nature of his themes. There was nothing left to debunk in the postcolonial societies; they had debunked themselves, and the hustlers and the jesters had been shown for what they were. There crept into Naipaul's work in this new phase of his life a spirit of acceptance, perhaps even a measure of atonement. To the extent that he could, he would arrive at some reconciliation with the "dark places" of the earth. This must have come with age, with the peace that he had made with himself and his life in England and his place in the literary world. Why else would he begin his new book with a defensive declaration? "This is a book about people. It is not a book of opinion."

This change of tone had been gathering pace. In *Finding the Centre* (1984), the writer had made his way to the Ivory Coast, to its wet forests, and his chronicle of that journey, "The Crocodiles of Yamoussoukro," bespoke a new patience with the ways of distant lands. Gone was the old fury with pretense and make-believe. The ritual feeding of the crocodiles, in an artificial lake, on the grounds of President Houphouet-Boigny's ancestral village, was presented on its own indigenous terms: the crocodiles as

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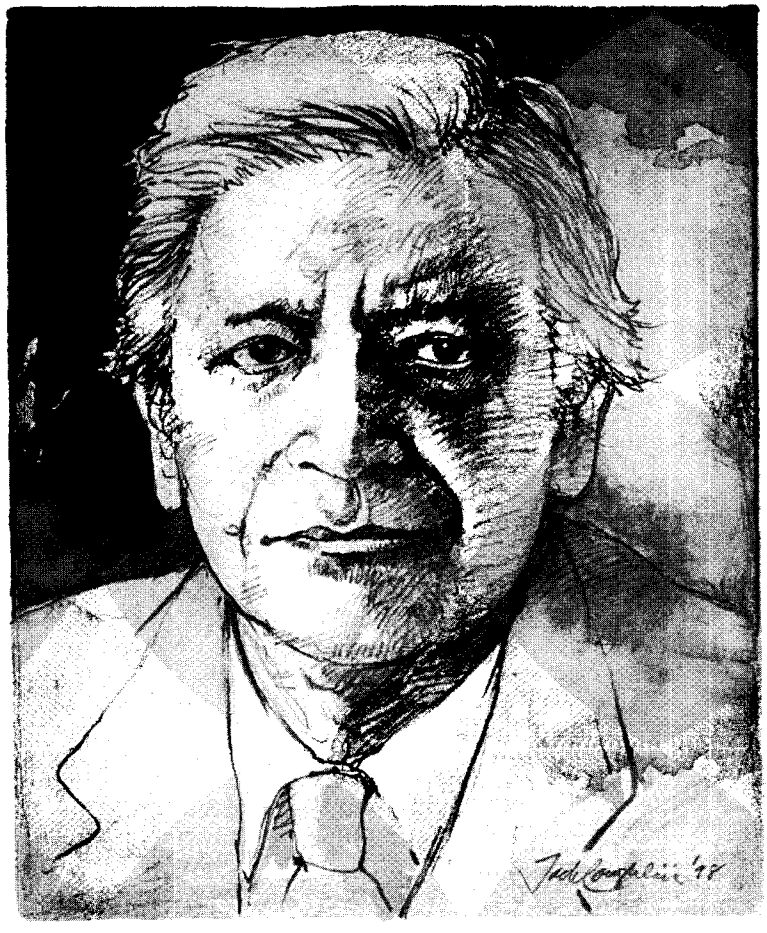
"totemic, emblematic creatures" representing the chief's magical authority. At Yamoussoukro, the writer caught a glimpse of an "African Africa" which has always been, in its own eyes, "complete, achieved, bursting with its own powers." A generation earlier, in a chronicle of Mobutu and Zaire, he had been scathing in his depiction of the cult of the ancestors and of the "magical" authority of the ruler. He saw through the thing: the cult of the ancestors as a cover for dependence, the cult of the chief as a cover for authoritarianism and plunder. But this time around he would make no judgments. He was there for "the narrative."

There was a new peace also with India, his ancestral land. After his abrasive portraits of India in *An Area of Darkness* (1964) and *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), there appeared a third chronicle, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), a rambling account that spoke with some wonder of the emergence in India of a central will, of a vibrant, new society which was making its way past the old cruelties and the "nullity" of Indian history. Indeed, travel itself was becoming less necessary for the writer, less glamored.

Thus the two major books of the last decade—*The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) and *A Way in the World* (1994)—were hybrid works of "imagined autobiography," and works of real literary genius. We can be strangers to ourselves, Naipaul said, and so these two books were meant to explore the mystery of his background and the "promptings" of his imagination. The fragments of his life, the inheritance that he was bequeathed, the peopling of the New World, the movement in the second half of this century of a whole class of people unsettled by the dissolution of empires: this was the stuff of these two books. There was a break with the political journalism of his earlier years. He had been captured by the controversies of the postcolonial world and non-Western nationalism, and these two books constituted a kind of reprieve. No more politics, no more wanderings, no more disputations.

Naipaul's new book is an uneasy mix of the two phases of his writerly life. He is traveling again; and again into contested matters. *Beyond Belief* is the retracing of an older journey that Naipaul had made in 1979 and early 1980 into four Islamic lands: Iran, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan. The book that grew out of that earlier inquiry, *Among the Believers*, was not particularly subtle or learned. As he crudely put it, he traveled to these four countries to see "Islam in action." He journeyed into a great storm, his own panic about political Islam magnifying the panic that he found on the road. This knowledgeable man had left home unprepared. He had read little about these countries; instead he put his faith in his own inclinations. And also in the traveler's luck: it would bring him what it would bring him in chance encounters and conversations.



V.S. NAIPAUL BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Naipaul's old unease with Islam persists, alas, into his new inquiry. True, the tone is slightly different. There is that opening disclaimer that this is a book about "people" and not "opinion." This time the work is informed by the traveler's desire to be fascinated but neutral, to be a "manager of narrative," to stay in the background. Yet the book's very reason for being, the theme of "conversion" which ties it together (these are "Islamic excursions among the converted peoples")—this is opinion through and through. And it is ill-considered opinion, too.

Consider this early passage, which states the book's central claim and weighs it down, to the point of sinking it.

> Islam is in its origins an Arab religion. Everyone not an Arab who is a Muslim is a convert. Islam is not simply a matter of conscience or private belief. It makes imperial demands. A convert's worldview alters. His holy places are in Arab lands; his sacred language is Arabic. His idea of history alters. He rejects his own; he becomes, whether he likes it or not, a part of the Arab story. The convert has to turn away from everything that is his. The disturbance for societies is immense, and even after a thousand years can remain unresolved; the turning away has to be done again and again. People develop fantasies about who and what they are; and in the Islam of converted countries there is an element of neurosis and nihilism. These countries can be easily set on the boil.

This is an odd, obtuse view of religion. Islam—like Christianity, its immediate predecessor—is a world religion. Its worldly and otherworldly ideals are universal. Strictly speaking, everyone outside the Hijaz—like everyone outside Galilee and Calvary—is a convert to these faiths. By this measure of conversion, Egypt is no less a converted land than Iran or Indonesia. Only four thousand horsemen came to Egypt from the Hijaz to subdue Egypt in the seventh century. Most likely Islam became a majority faith in Egypt as late as the fourteenth century. The Coptic faith endured, even as the Coptic language retreated to become the sacred language of liturgy; Egypt had imbued Islam with its own culture and temperament, with the rituals, and the centralized rule, of this unique people of the valley and the river.

No converted society, moreover, took the faith and left it as it was, unaltered. Conquered in 637 by Islam, Iran worked its will on the faith, stamped it with its own cosmology and symbolism and artistic flair and taste for philosophical argument. Iran did not surrender wholesale.

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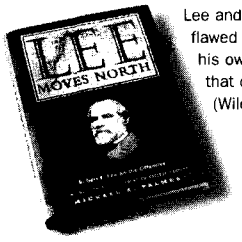
THE Reader's PAGE.

LEE MOVES NORTH

by Michael A. Palmer

Robert E. Lee's astounding victory at Chancellorsville stunned the country and made his subsequent defeats all the more baffling. Michael A. Palmer deconstructs Lee and finds a man whose flawed offensive tactics led to his own undoing, and even to that of the entire Confederacy. (Wiley)



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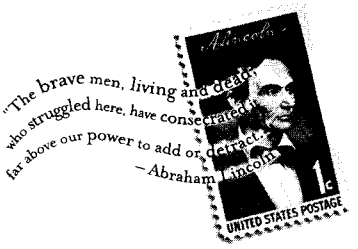
"The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract."
– Abraham Lincoln
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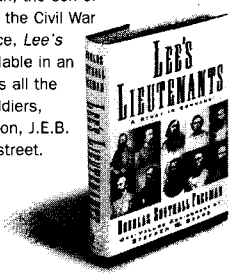
LEE'S LIEUTENANTS

A STUDY IN COMMAND

by Douglas S. Freeman

Douglas Southall Freeman, the son of a Confederate soldier, is the Civil War historian. His masterpiece, *Lee's Lieutenants*, is now available in an abridgment, and contains all the mythical Confederate soldiers, such as Stonewall Jackson, J.E.B. Stuart, and James Longstreet. (Scribner)



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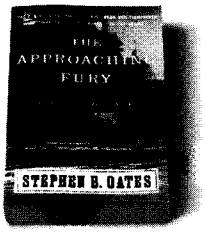

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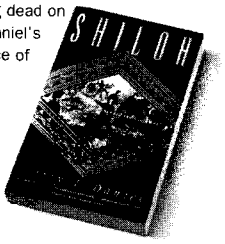

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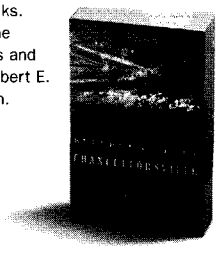

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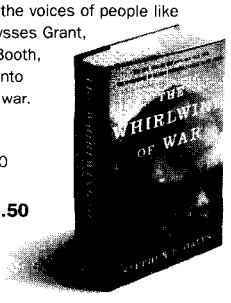
VOICES OF THE STORM, 1861-1865

by Stephen B. Oates

The second volume of Stephen B. Oates' projected Civil War trilogy explores the years of warfare. Using the voices of people like Robert E. Lee, Ulysses Grant, and John Wilkes Booth, Oates carries us into the battles of the war. (HarperCollins)



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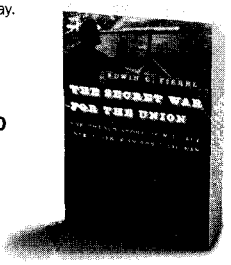

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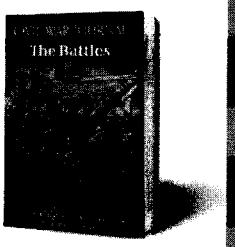

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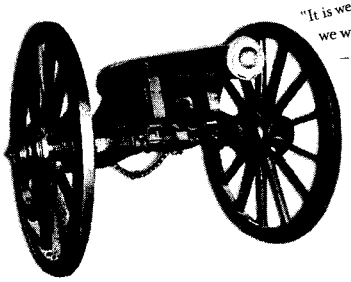
"It is well that war is so terrible – we would grow too fond of it."
– Robert E. Lee



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Thus the period of "Arab ascendancy" in Islam was brief. The prestige of Arabian descent, the pride of the conquerors, soon dissipated; for the Arabs had given the conquered peoples an instrument of emancipation. That instrument was Islam itself.

After the Arab ascendancy, Islam made its great world-historical way. Hegemony passed from the Arabs to the Persians, then to the Turks. Traders, the movement of people and goods and ideas, took the faith from India to southeast Asia—Sumatra and Java and Borneo. Those "converts" had not known or met the Arabs. Indeed, only the most extreme of Arab nationalists (the ruling stratum in Iraq, for example, themselves descendants of "converts") would concur in the view of Islam put forth by Naipaul. His controlling notion of "conversion" represents a fundamental misunderstanding of what he rightly seeks to understand.

In search of authenticity, Naipaul has misconstrued it. No writer today would take his notebook to the Baltics, say, in search of "converted" Christians. Christianity came late to the west Slavs and the Balts; a whole arc of polytheism stretched from Saxony to the Arctic Circle. The chroniclers tell us that it was not until 1368 that the Lithuanian dynasty adopted Christianity in return for the Polish crown. Latin Christendom had made its way east of the Elbe with no small measure of difficulty. The first bishoprics were established in the tenth century; and there were violent pagan reactions in the lands of eastern Europe before Christianity and its bishoprics prevailed in the eleventh century. And for all the ideology of the *reconquista*, to give another example, the spread of Christianity in that most Catholic of domains in the Iberian Peninsula from its toe-holds in Santiago and Catalonia was similarly a process of conquest and conversion. It was priests and monks from the French theological center in Cluny who did the work of conversion as the kingdoms in the north made their way southward. It was a similar process that played out centuries after the conversion of Persia to Islam; and this process was not in any way a qualification of the authenticity of the new Muslims. Quite the contrary. They were not a falling off, they were a fulfillment.

Five months in four countries; four vastly different societies brought together by the theme of "conversion." Naipaul can plead that his travels yield only fiction or narrative, but the truth is that his readers will come to him as they have always come to him, in search of authoritative judgments on political and civilizational matters. And Naipaul's "Islamic excursions" are of a piece, unfortunately, with the contemporary tendency to reduce the politics of Muslim societies to Islam, to religious categories. It is a shallow view.

We have just been treated to a great upheaval in Indonesia. The ruler has fallen; a perverted form of capitalism and plunder has imploded under the weight of debt and mismanagement and nepotism. The man at the helm, at once a Javanese king and one of a handful of authoritarian rulers that anti-Communism had thrown on the scene in the 1960s, had become a source of instability. An officer corps from which the ruler had risen stepped in to save the system by dispatching the ruler. This is an utterly secular tale. Its categories are political, profane. There is nothing Islamic about what has just transpired in Indonesia: the same script could have unfolded in a handful of Latin American dictatorships a decade or so ago.

Nor is there anything Islamic about the racial rage toward the Chinese minority in Indonesia. The rage towards, and the envy of, a minority skilled in the ways of the market, but marked by its own difference, is, alas, the common plot of our world. The clever trader, existing in the interstices, living off the fat of the land and the labor of the good sons of the soil, has been the classic stuff of anti-Semitism from the Iberian Peninsula in centuries past to Russia and eastern Europe in more recent times. And this same kind of sentiment lies at the heart of Serbian historiography—the dread and the loathing of the merchants of Sarajevo and the worldliness of Sarajevo. Religion is hardly the only engine of injustice.

In a predominantly Muslim society, it would stand to reason that the language of obedience and the language of rebellion would be phrased in Islamic terms. The pious ruler begets the pious oppositionist. Yet the really remarkable thing about the unfolding struggle in Indonesia is the reticence of religion. The students who laid siege to the Parliament spoke in familiar secular terms. This was not a reprise of Iran, it was a reprise of another place in the tropics, the Philippines and its "people power" that swept away Marcos and his cronies. The young had wearied of Bapak (Father) and wanted a new beginning. This is not Muslim, it is human.

The agitation in Jakarta included an association of "Muslim intellectuals," but it was domesticated and bought off. Its patron was none other than B.J. Habibie, Suharto's hand-picked satrap and successor. Indeed, one of that association's leading figures, Imaduddin, offers a cautionary tale about the glib imputation of the actions of Muslims to Islam. Imaduddin appears in both of Naipaul's journeys, and he raises, for Naipaul, the risk of being taken in, the risk of looking for belief where there is only need and ambition. On that first passage, fifteen years ago, Imaduddin was a lecturer in engineering at the Bandung Institute of Technology and a man on the fringe, a preacher and a rebel. A child of Sumatra (which is wilder and more zealous about the faith than Java), he had run afoul of the regime and had been imprisoned for fourteen months. Schooled in Iowa, the son of a man who, in his time, had gone to al-Azhar University in Cairo for religious training, Imaduddin had struck Naipaul as a man of fire and brimstone. "For Imaduddin, as a Muslim and a Sumatran, Indonesia was a place to be cleansed," Naipaul wrote in *Among the Believers.*

But faith can be a pose. Fifteen years later, the same Imaduddin was a man of the regime. Thanks to Habibie's patronage, he had "shot up." He had a decent house in a decent neighborhood, a Mercedes, a driver, his own television program. He was now in "human resource development." He had become a promoter of Suharto, and had given up on revolution, preaching a "doctrine of accelerated evolution." The faith was tethered to the career, made to serve it. Imaduddin told a visiting journalist this spring that Suharto was a "good Muslim," that the rebellious students had been misguided, that Suharto and Indonesia would ride out the time of troubles.

It is easy to be taken in by people and places we don't really know. On his earlier journey, one of Naipaul's Indonesian informants told him of the confusion—more precisely, the eclecticism—that lay at the heart of the culture and the religions of the place. Naipaul should have paid closer heed. "No one," his informant said, "could say precisely what he was. People said, 'I am a Muslim, but—.' Or 'I am a Christian, but—.'" It is this "but," this ambiguity, that is missing in a narrative of this sort. And so the faith must be invented, and it must be sharp if it is to serve the narrative.

The people of Indonesia lived long with cultural chaos. Islam had arrived here as a religion of India in the latter years of the fifteenth century, in Sumatra and Borneo and the harbors of trade in Java, before it penetrated to the rice plains of the Javanese interior. The process of Islamization was slow and subtle. The princes of the trading harbors of Java's northern coast were the first to cross over to Islam. The tale has been

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masterfully told by Clifford Geertz in his brief, durable book, *Islam Observed*, which appeared in 1968. The princes and nobility of Madjapahit, the last of the great Hindu-Buddhist states, had embraced the new faith and left Madjapahit: "a court without a country, an hieratic shell which soon collapsed entirely," as Geertz writes.

Geertz tells the extraordinary tale (mostly a legend, a metaphor, though it is about the life of an historical personage) of Indonesia's conversion to Islam through the life of a Javanese prince named Sunan Kalidjaga. It was Kalidjaga who brought Java from the shadow-play world of *djaman Indu*, or Hindu times, to *djaman Islam*, or Islamic times. Born the son of a high court official of Madjapahit, Kalidjaga's life mirrored the dislocations of his time, which was a time without order. He drifted from place to place; he was a drinker, a womanizer, and a gambler. Then, in Djapara, one of the harbor states, he happened upon Sunan Bonang, one of the great disciples of Islam.

Bonang had shown him the way to the faith, when the bandit-prince had tried to rob him of his jewelry. Bonang had turned a banyan tree to gold but was indifferent to worldly things. Bonang then left Kalidjaga on the banks of a river, perhaps for forty years, during which he survived floods and the comings and goings of crowds. He had seen the logic and power of the new faith. Kalidjaga converted to Islam, as Geertz pointedly observes, "without ever having read the Koran, entered a mosque, or heard a prayer." He was a transitional figure between the dying world of Madjapahit and the great interior Muslim state of Mataram, which held sway until the Dutch shattered it in the eighteenth century.

It was folk Islam that had prevailed in Java and Borneo and Sumatra and the Celebes. The Indic tradition had been overthrown, but it had survived, Geertz writes, "stripped of the bulk of its ritual expression but not of its inward temper." Then Dutch dominion had settled in, and Islam had alternated between submission to colonial rule and rebellion. In this great historical see-saw, then, scriptural Islam was a latecomer. It arrived in the middle of the nineteenth century, with the steamships, and the pilgrimage to Mecca, and the elite education in Cairo's religious schools. Islam, scriptural Islam, had never had the place to itself. The "culture system" of Dutch colonialism had thrown it on the defensive. And the Indic tradition, misted over, had never been extinguished.

It would be hard to fit this kind of eclecticism into Naipaul's chronicle, hard to carry it along. Now and then he recognizes this complexity, and his informants give voice to it. But Naipaul's journey is in search of believers, people who could set countries "on the boil." But societies do not only boil; and in the age of the Iranian revolution it is odd to have forgotten that faith can also be an instrument of obedience, the prop of power.

Consider Abdul Rahman Wahid, whom Naipaul encountered on his trip. Wahid is an influential leader of Indonesia's reformist Muslim movement, Nahdlatul Ulama (literally, the renaissance of the religious scholars), which is said to have more than 30 million adherents. Wahid had followers and he had pedigree: his grandfather had made the pilgrimage to Mecca in the latter years of the nineteenth century and had come back to establish the *pesantren*, or religious boarding schools, that served as the basis of Wahid's movement. Wahid's father had been schooled in religious subjects, but he had also acquired knowledge of Dutch and mathematics.

When Wahid inherited the leadership of the movement, he proceeded to take it out of politics. In the recent upheaval in Indonesia, Wahid was a man of caution. He had seen the mix of religion and politics in other Islamic lands and wished to spare his country that incendiary mix. "In our thought," he told Naipaul, "Islam is a moral force which works through ethics and morality." Not for this man were the furies and the simplifications of politicized religion. It was not easy to fit Wahid into Naipaul's narrative, and the writer's exasperation shows. Of Wahid, he writes: "I wanted to get a picture, some conversation, a story. It wasn't easy."

The religion: it is not quite as total and as unworldly as Naipaul fears. It carries also the material world of men and women, and their distress; it gives voice to their needs and their ways. It acts on the skills and the moral development and the material circumstances that are already there. It speaks calmly and confidently when a culture is ascendant and at peace, and it is made to wail when a people are trapped and feel betrayed. In unintended ways, Naipaul's two Islamic chronicles, read side by side, expose the profane forces that fill a religious faith, the ebb and the flow of human grievance expressed in the idiom of religion, the sharpening of the faith in times of distress, and the lapse into routine under more prosaic circumstances.

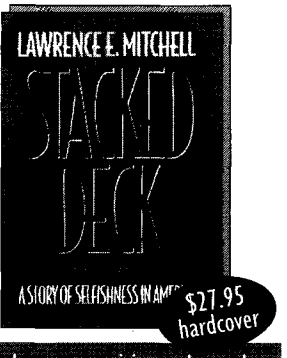
In the chronicle of 1981, Malaysia was a steamed place, where the Malay rage at the Chinese, the Malay sense that they had been disinherited by the Chinese, dominated the economy, and created a combustible politics, a "general nervousness"—the odd sensation, in a land of steam and river and forest, of "the atmosphere of the ideological state." The fury of the *Bumiputras*, the sons of the soil, was everywhere; it was comprehensive, "the rage of pastoral people with limited, skills, limited money, and a limited grasp of the world."

But behold Malaysia in Naipaul's new chronicle. Prosperity has tamed the old rage. A young lawyer, a Malay, tells the writer that the Malays had become a "trading and manufacturing and innovative people. These are all words you would not have associated with Malays in the past," he says. And there is Nasar. In the old chronicle, he was a Kampung (village) boy in the Muslim Youth Movement, a young man of twenty-five. A generation later he is running a holding company that manages the affairs of eight corporations. "He remembered what he had been in 1979; he didn't put a gloss on it," Naipaul writes. The material world had altered. "The racial anxieties of sixteen years before had been swamped by the great new wealth, and new men had been created on both sides."

STACKED DECK

A Story of Selfishness in America

Lawrence E. Mitchell



"With elegance, creativity, and moral seriousness, Lawrence E. Mitchell helps us to understand the tensions between individual autonomy and social fairness in an entirely new light."
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We may travel the world in search of a burning faith, but what we find instead are the great material facts that underpin the faith. Life had been easy for the pastoral people of Malaysia, one of Naipaul's Malay informants reflects. You could throw a seed and it would grow, you could put a bare hook in the water and you would catch fish. The Chinese who came from a "four-seasoned country" over the course of the nineteenth century had been more skilled. The Malays had to assimilate the skills of the modern world, so as to catch up. Of course, the material world may alter again in Malaysia, and the prosperity may crack. Back and forth, back and forth, men and women move between faith and the secular world, each a reflection of the other.

At least since the Iranian upheaval of 1979, it has been harder and harder to maintain the distinction between writing about Islam and writing about Muslims. It is a distinction with a great difference; but as a consequence of the eruption in Iran, and the panic that its radicalism caused, a vast and varied world, societies of different temperaments and situations, have come to be arranged and analyzed under the gross rubric of politicized Islam. A whole industry has grown around this subject; it has given writers and journalists with precious little knowledge of distant societies an illusion of familiarity and mastery, a certain absolution from looking at Muslim lands soberly and unapocalyptically, with precision and detail. The subject is awash in intellectual complacency.

The politics must lie in the faith, the pundits and the visitors insist. Like all reductions, this reduction enjoys a certain economy: the ability to shrink distant and diverse societies into a core, a hot and glowing center, that is easy to identify and to explain. It is a useful trick, this trick of finding a faith, the same faith, in the *casbah* and alleyways of Algiers and among the pastoral, tropical people of the villages of the Malays. It is a curious and unremarked irony, this convergence of outlook between the radical activists of "political Islam," who simplify the world and insist on a single indivisible Islamic *umma*, and the Western writers who chronicle this breed of religious radicals. For both, the world must be ordered and simplified and imputed a faith that has been "set on the boil."

This large assumption has animated Naipaul's two Islamic inquiries. He gave voice to this sentiment in stark, unadorned terms in one of his meditations on contemporary culture, a talk called "Our Universal Civilization" that he gave at the Manhattan Institute in 1990, midway between his two trips. "Now traveling among non-Arab Muslims, I found myself among a colonized people who have been stripped by their faith of all that expanding intellectual life, all the varied life of the mind and senses, the expanding cultural and historical knowledge of the world, that I had been growing into on the other side of the world. I was among a people whose identity was more or less contained in the faith. I was among a people who wished to be pure.... No colonization could have been greater than this colonization by the faith." It is a strange thing to say about this most disabused of writers, but Naipaul's exploration of the Muslims turns out to be insufficiently secular.

"I had only my notes to go by," he writes in *Beyond Belief*. Yet in truth he had more than his notes to go by, he had also this large simplifying vision that he brought with him. And therein lie the limitations of the literary journey. The genre of travel writing, the form of the notes, is only what it is; the street yields only what the street yields. The foreign traveler is in a hurry. The language is strange to him, the interior spaces are forbidden to him. There are the guides and the interpreters—this industry of "minders" around the international hotels in the distressed locations on which foreign observers descend in search of the quick sound-bite; and there are the English-language dailies, the *Tehran Times*, the *Jakarta Post*, the *Indonesia Times*; and there are the international hotels, gilded cages which provide shelter from the tumult and increase the traveler's loneliness.

A man of cultural marginality, it is easier for Naipaul to see the pain of other marginal people, even if he cannot extend a similar sympathy to the dominant faith. Of the Chinese of Malaysia, he writes: "I began to have some idea of how little the Chinese were protected in the last century and the early part of this, with a crumbling empire and civil war at home and rejection outside: spilling out, trying to find a footing wherever they could, always foreign, insulated by language and culture, surviving only through blind energy. Once self-awareness had begun to come, once blindness had begun to go, they would have needed philosophical or religious certainties as much as the Malays."

That is the Naipaulian way: the paragraph of intelligence and beauty, the insight that suddenly illuminates places and people that we have not quite known. Those notes that he kept are occasionally gorgeous, the traveler's luck joined to the writer's skill. Consider Naipaul's passage about Linus, a Catholic convert in Java, a poet lamenting the passing of old, simpler times: "Even the rice had changed. 'The old traditional rice was full of savor and taste.' He made a gesture, taking his fingers to his nose. 'The new Filipino rice—you can't eat it in the evening if you cook it in the morning.'" Or this passage about the rupture in his own and his family's soul, the distance in Trinidad from their sacred places in India: "My first eighteen years were spent two oceans away, on the other side of the globe, in the new world, in an island on the mouth of the one great South American river. The island had no sacred places; and it was nearly forty years after I had left the island that I identified the lack. I began to feel when I was quite young that there was an incompleteness, an emptiness, about the place, that the real world existed somewhere else. I used to feel that the climate had burned away history and possibility." And here is Naipaul writing with graceful penetration about the *mohajirs*, the Muslim migrants from India, who came in great numbers to the feudal land of Sind:

> They had agitated more than anyone else for the separate Muslim state, and they came to Pakistan and Sind as to their own land. They found that it belonged to someone else; and the people to whom it belonged were not willing to let go. The *mohajirs* became the fifth nationality of Pakistan, after the Baluchis, the Pathans, the Punjabis, and the Sindhis. They were a nationality without territory. And that was where, a generation or two later, the war of Karachi began; with the *mohajir* wish for territory. They wished Karachi to be theirs; they were a majority in Karachi. Their passion, their sense of grievance, was like religion; it was a replay of the agitation by their fathers and grandfathers fifty years before for Pakistan.

It was Iran and its upheaval that prompted those Muslim inquiries of Naipaul; and his pages on Iran are the best of his new book. Here he is traveling into a great disappointment: by now the political faith, Islam in power, had behind it a generation of rule. The distress is everywhere; the faith has been dearly paid for. In a desert south of Tehran, by the vast mausoleum of Ayatollah Khomeini, there is the Martyrs' Cemetery. Naipaul goes there with his interpreter Mehrdad, a university student. "Below the pines and the elms everything was close together, the lines of headstones and picture-holders, the spindly shrubs that grew in the sand, and the flags, hemmed in by the shrubs and trees and not able to flutter, and like part of the vegetable

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growth." They had died by the tens of thousands, the children of the revolution, in the war with Iraq. The crowds were nearby, at Khomeini's shrine; but here there was hardly an attendant, and the desert dust "had ravaged the aluminum picture-holders.... Some of them were absolutely empty now; sometimes the photographs had decayed or collapsed within the frame." Reality had overwhelmed the revolution's poses: "We went to the blood fountain. It used to be famous. When it was set up early on during the war, it spouted purple-dyed water, and it was intended to stimulate ideas of blood and sacrifice and redemption. The fountain didn't play now; the basin was empty. There had been too much real blood."

He picks up another thread from his earlier journey, and the traveler's luck pays off: he seeks and finds Khomeini's hanging judge, the notorious Ayatollah Khalkhalli. He finds him in Qom. In the old revolutionary days, Khalkhalli was a busy and important man. His revolutionary court in Tehran worked around the clock: it was high and bloody theater, and Khalkhalli played it to the hilt, the revolution's justice and the revolution's spectacle. Hundreds were put to death by Khalkhalli, and the hanging judge was a celebrity. In an audience that he gave Naipaul, he acted like his own jester: "I was a shepherd when I was a boy. Right now I know how to cut off a sheep's head." It was the way of a man who had come into great power; Khalkhalli's bodyguards had rocked with laughter, and Khalkhalli himself, warming to his own lines, had choked with laughter, "showing me his gums, his tongue, his gullet."

But a revolutionary ride is always bumpy, and often it is very dangerous. In the intervening years Khalkhalli lost out. He is now a figure on the fringe. His court, his power, the bodyguards who laughed on cue, are all gone. "He came in now," Naipaul relates. "And it was an entrance. He was barefooted, in simple white, like a penitent.... A short-sleeved white tunic, wet with perspiration down the middle of his chest, hung over a loose white lower garment. Step by dragging step he came in, very small, completely bald, baby-faced without his turban, head held down against his chest, looking up from below his forehead, eyes without mischief now and seemingly close to tears, as though he wished to dramatize his situation and needed pity."

Naipaul catches the pain of Iran, the terrible cruelty of its revolt, in a tale supplied to him by an old Iranian diplomat. The tale has the "quality of a folk myth," the sort of story perhaps "fabricated out of the general need, made up by no one but contributed to by everyone." A middle-aged woman in a *chador* is eager to have the eyesight of a young man restored; she takes him to a specialist; the specialist examines the boy and sees that he is mutilated beyond rehabilitation. He had lost his hands, his feet. The lady is not related to the boy, but she is always there for him; and the doctor grows curious about the young man and the woman in the *chador*. He learns from her that she had lost her own son, and that the mutilated boy, disfigured in Iran's war with Iraq, was her neighbor's son. "My own boy, my own son was executed because he belonged to an anti-revolutionary group. The person who reported him was this neighbor's son. I am happy my son is dead. He was executed, and that was all. I want to keep this piece of meat alive to take revenge. I want his mother to grieve for him every day."

No Javanese shadow-play here. Here history is martyrdom and revenge. After the exertion, after the flamboyance, the new pain flowed into the country's painful history. "All that could be said was that the country had been given an almost universal knowledge of pain." The ground had burned in Iran; and we have no way of knowing what seeds will germinate in the smoldering earth, and neither does Naipaul.

A traveler can only see the exterior of things. He can render only what stories men and women in harsh places and times are willing to confide to strangers. Naipaul can take us to Qom; we can enter with him and his interpreter and his driver; we can see, through his eyes and his pen, the wonder of the place, of the town of high religious learning in the desert, a town of "an old idea of learning, with all its superseded emblems of color and dress." But this is as far as we, and he, can go; all that we, and he, can see.

He cannot report, for example, on the disputations that flourish in that world. We need more direct testimonies if we are to come to terms with that society and its inflammations. It is a feature of that Islamic civilization (in its Arab-Persian-Turkish zone, to be specific) that the truth of life is to be found beyond and behind the high walls and the drab exteriors, in the tiled courtyards and the private chambers that are meant to keep others out and to keep secrets in. Few hurried travelers, few *ghareebs* or strangers, are taken beyond the walls and the courtyard. It casts no aspersion on Naipaul's extraordinary talent as a writer to point out that he has no access to the inner precincts of that universe.

Traveling to Malaysia and Indonesia, Naipaul has gone where Conrad had been; and he is animated in no small measure by the calling to retrace Conrad's path. Conrad went to the Dutch East Indies in 1887 aboard the *Vidar*, a vessel owned by an Arab, which sailed under the Dutch flag and was commanded by an Englishman. He was thirty years old. His experience as a seaman nourished his art, and the archipelago and the waters of Borneo served as the setting of *Almayer's Folly*, *Lord Jim*, *Youth*, *An Outcast of the Islands*. It is in the Malay setting as well that "The Lagoon," the first short story of Conrad that was read to Naipaul when he was a boy of ten, is situated.

What Conrad found in those harbors, what he bequeathed to us, was the tumult of that world: the clashing colonialisms, in the fight over Borneo between the British and the Dutch; the piracy; the steamships beginning to carry the pilgrims to Mecca and Arabia; the mystery of "the East," and the "thought of men of old, who centuries ago, went that road in ships that sailed no better, to the land of palms, and spices, and yellow sands, and of brown nations ruled by kings more cruel than Nero the Roman, and more splendid than Solomon the Jew." In his novella *Youth*, Conrad created what remains, for me, the most arresting image of the making of the modern world and the uprooting of people from traditional ways, the wrenching of the self that an ascendant culture forced on those who happened in its way:

> And then, before I could open my lips, the East spoke to me, but it was in a Western voice. A torrent of words was poured into the enigmatical, the fateful silence; outlandish, angry words, mixed with words and even whole sentences of good English, less strange but even more surprising. The voice swore and cursed violently; it riddled the solemn peace of the bay by a volley of abuse. It began by calling me Pig, and from that went crescendo into unmentionable adjectives—in English. The man up there raged aloud in two languages, and with a sincerity in his fury that almost convinced me I had, in some way, sinned against the harmony of the universe.

"Whole sentences of good English," the world remade, the pain of a modernity to which men and women submit, against which men and women rebel: the whole wonder of that world. This is the Conradian standard of which Naipaul has fallen short. He does not capture the whole wonder. For it was not some simplified political and religious creed that Conrad sought and found in those harbors. He came with conceptions, but he made a voyage of discovery. And so he caught truths, deeper and more durable truths about himself and about us all. •

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Fear and Thinking

By Peter Berkowitz

Political Thought and Political Thinkers
by Judith N. Shklar
edited by Stanley Hoffmann

(University of Chicago Press, 402 pp., $21)

Redeeming American Political Thought
by Judith N. Shklar
edited by Stanley Hoffmann and Dennis F. Thompson

(University of Chicago Press, 209 pp., $13.95)

We tend to take liberalism for granted, to use it as a kind of political and philosophical punching bag. So liberalism is denounced as the theory of big, cumbersome government and as the theory of small, ineffective government; its principles are condemned for justifying government that is too intrusive and for requiring a government that is too limited; the public law promulgated under its name is scorned for refusing to take a stand on fundamental questions of the good life and for insidiously promulgating a particular way of life as the best and the true one.

Of course, few of those who complain about liberalism seriously contemplate a politics that does not respect individual rights, insure equality before the law, and support the practice of toleration. In these circumstances, in which liberalism's core commitments are widely shared and its political expressions are freely disdained, it is embarrassingly easy to forget that less than a half-century ago, with one totalitarian monster defeated and another on the rise, thoughtful men and women could fear for liberalism's future, or that the defense of liberal principles could summon the energy and the intelligence of exceptional individuals.

In these circumstances, it is especially instructive to examine the achievement of Judith N. Shklar, who was all her life a proud and indefatigable defender of the liberal faith. Shklar, who died in 1992, belonged to the youngest generation of European-formed intellectuals who found refuge in North America and enormously enriched its academic and intellectual life after the war. Born in Riga in 1928, Shklar escaped with her family in 1939. She fled Hitler's reach via the Trans-Siberian railroad, went to high school and college in Canada, arrived at Harvard as a graduate student in 1950, and never really left.

Shklar served as a professor of government at Harvard for more than thirty-five years. While she never acquired renown beyond the academy, she became an institution at Harvard, and from her commanding position there she exerted an enormous influence on the study of politics and political ideas. Her ability to pierce to the heart of complicated issues could dazzle. The range of her knowledge was breathtaking. At the same time, she had a weakness for deflecting doubts and disagreement with harsh, high-handed, rapid-fire rhetoric. Such was the power of her personality that in the weeks after her death, many friends from the world of political theory were moved to observe that Shklar appeared to put the lie to Machiavelli's teaching that outstanding individuals had to choose between being loved and being feared.

Shklar's first book, *After Utopia*, appeared in 1957. It sought to expose the moral pretensions and the analytical inadequacies of romanticism and Christian fatalism, two leading "enemies of the Enlightenment." The sensibility in this young woman's book is already mature and unmistakable: the profound distrust of metaphysical abstractions and comprehensive theories; the tendency to explain the attraction of big ideas in terms of moral psychology; the view, at once pessimistic and compassionate, that politics is damage control. And the learning, the command of argument, the authoritative voice issuing sharp, unsparing judgments, are also all there in the beginning.

Upon its publication in 1965, her second book, *Legalism: Law, Morals, and Political Trials*, ruffled many feathers on the American bench and bar by criticizing the then-popular view that law was an autonomous discipline. Shklar argued that the resolution of controversies through the "rule of law" was itself a controversial political choice, and so the use and the limits of courts must be ascertained by an examination of their political impact. Then followed *Men and Citizens* (1969), an influential study of Rousseau, whom Shklar admired as "first and foremost a psychologist, 'the historian of the human heart,'" and whom she regarded, among social critics, as "the most devastating of all." Her next book, a valiant attempt to make a political philosopher's sense out of Hegel's account in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of the ascent from the most elementary forms of consciousness to the peak of absolute knowing, attracted little notice.

In 1984, Shklar published *Ordinary Vices*, a book in which she seemed to have found her genre, as well as a subject superbly suited to her eclectic gifts and the voice that was always all her own. In rich and rambling essays, she drew on literature, history, works of political theory, and everyday experience to explore the vices that in countless ways cause us to humiliate others and make fools of ourselves.

> Cruelty, hypocrisy, snobbery, treachery, and misanthropy all share a special quality: they have both personal and public dimensions.... Because these vices flaw our character so deeply, they are a common sight everywhere. As such, they pose complicated puzzles for liberal democrats, who have notorious difficulties in settling the boundaries between private and public spheres of conduct. Some personal vices, which may be completely revolting to a free people, must nevertheless, as a matter of principle or prudence, be overlooked. That is especially difficult with the vices that I have in mind—cruelty, misanthropy, hypocrisy, snobbery, and treachery. They are not like unpopular views or obnoxious ideologies, to which people have a constitutional right, nor do they encompass merely specific acts or decisions. These vices may involve our whole character, and our responses to them are therefore far deeper, both emotionally and speculatively.

Shklar argued that liberals had every right—and a pressing responsibility—to be concerned with the complexities of character. But instead of inquiring like haughty aristocrats, visionary romantics, or conservative moralists into the nature of moral virtue and the achievement of human excellence, liberals should focus on the avoidance of the ordinary vices, particularly those that inflict wounds on other human beings.

Shklar's *Montesquieu* (1987) is a short, introductory volume. She celebrates the

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great French political theorist for teaching that law is part of a social and political whole, and therefore must be crafted with a view to geography, climate, mores, commerce, and religion; for defending liberty by exposing the tendency to despotism inherent in all government; and for demonstrating that philosophically informed narrative history is the indispensable foundation of political understanding.

In Shklar's last two books, both brief but splendidly suggestive, several admirers have been delighted to detect the emergence of not only a reformist spirit but also a preference for social democracy. These admirers have pointed out that in *The Faces of Injustice* (1990) Shklar argues that "when we can alleviate suffering, whatever its cause, it is passively unjust to stand by and do nothing." Yet because of her keen appreciation of "the ambiguities of just reform," Shklar remains skeptical about summoning the state to right wrongs and make individuals whole:

> There is no denying that greater equality of power would enhance the conditions for justice, but many of the plans offered for its achievement are flawed. The single most serious objection to them is not that they are radical but that they are often so paternalistic as to arouse a sense of injustice. Though they aim at a more perfect democracy, plans for the reform of existing institutions often require remaking the citizenry as well. And who exactly is competent to do so?

In *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion* (1991), Shklar does argue that political participation and the securing of the social and economic bases of political equality are crucial elements of democratic citizenship. And she eloquently expresses moral outrage at practices of exclusion that have tarnished our history, in particular slavery and its painful legacy. Unlike the demands of most theorists of social democracy, however, the forms of equality and inclusion that Shklar demands—voting and the opportunity to work and earn one's livelihood—are essentially minimum conditions of citizenship. They are not grounded, she insists, in a larger theory of human well-being.

In the final paragraphs of her book, Shklar contemplates the establishment of a qualified right to work, but she is tentative in her advocacy. She insists on thinking of such a right as "a presumption guiding our policies," because the right to work is not a self-evident moral right, and it may not be legally enforceable. Moreover, Shklar stresses that a right to work must be understood in terms of one's formal standing as a citizen, and cannot have as its goal the promotion of self-respect, since "self-respect is too vague and too subjective a state of mind to be the ground for any public policy."

Thanks to the efforts of two former colleagues at Harvard, we now know that Shklar's books by no means exhausted her scholarly achievement. Stanley Hoffmann has edited a generous sampling of those essays by Shklar that focus on political thought and political thinkers outside the United States; and, along with Dennis Thompson, he has assembled also a shorter collection of essays that focus only on America. These two volumes provide easy access to an impressive assortment of writings that span Shklar's career and testify to the breadth of her interests and the fertility of her mind. As Hoffmann observes in his beautiful and instructive preface, "It is hard not to be overwhelmed by Judith Shklar's work."

Indeed, Shklar's essays sparkle with ideas. It is true that some are dated. Some meander. Some of the essays, especially in *Political Thought and Political Thinkers*, will be too technical for the general reader. Others, particularly the previously unpublished essays in *Redeeming American Political Thought*, which derive from an undergraduate lecture course very close to Shklar's heart, are repetitive and will prove too casual for the specialist. But all the essays abound in original formulations, striking observations, stimulating lines of argument, and gems of textual interpretation.

Shklar's essays tend to revolve around major thinkers and enduring themes. Here one will find rich studies of Harrington, Pope, Rousseau, D'Alembert, Adams, Jefferson, Hawthorne, and Emerson; as well as explorations of the obligations and loyalties of political exiles, the uses of utopia, the political significance of history, the subversive possibilities of genealogy, the practice of friendship in personal life and politics, the meaning of political equality, and the boundaries of democracy in America. What one will *not* find in Shklar's essays, or in any of her books, is a comprehensive theory of politics.

She was not a systematic theorist. Still, Shklar's thought was governed by unyielding convictions. She was opinionated to the core; and her opinions were based on her unyielding convictions. Thus she did not develop an extended critique of the longing for community in contemporary political theory, but one encounters in an affectionate appreciation of the work of Michael Walzer a typically sharp criticism of the communitarian tendency to think of the state on the model of a club, to idealize voluntary associations, and to base moral judgment on citizens' "shared understandings":

> Far from sharing a common understanding, the citizens of a modern state are culturally disparate and often deeply hostile to one another as individuals and especially as members of ascriptive groups. A modern state, and that was from the first the great case made for it, not only stands above the warring groups but exists to mitigate by lawful coercion the murderous proclivities generated by racial, ethnic, and religious solidarity.... Walzer's clubs are creatures of a nostalgia that he can afford only because he lives in a constitutional democracy built on Enlightenment principles and not in a suffocating little city-state or in a community of enforced conformity to collective values. That his longing for them amounts to an interpretation of the immanent spirit of his fellow citizens strikes me as absurd. They are here precisely because they wanted to say good-bye to all that.

Similarly, Shklar does not provide a single, self-contained analysis of the wide variety of democratic theorists who have embraced Hannah Arendt's vision of the ancient Greek *polis* as a model for contemporary politics, but she makes clear her opinion that such theorizing is based on bad textual interpretation and culpable neglect of elemental history:

> In spite of what Aristotle tells us, [Arendt] was never very clear about what went on in that blessed "public space." In fact, we know that there was ferocious fighting between rich and poor and over who would conduct the next interpolis war, and in what manner. These unpleasant facts are rarely mentioned by those advocates of participatory democracy who became her disciples.

And while Shklar does not directly confront the challenge of postmodernism, she summarily disposes of the postmodern presumption that the intentions of a writer are unavailable or irrelevant, so that all reading becomes a kind of creative writing:

> I do not believe that many people would choose to read *Paradise Lost* in this way, and I know that this is not the way one goes about interpreting the great works of political philosophy.... If we did not think [the writer] a greater man than his readers, we would not undertake the labors of interpretation in the first place. The idea of making every reader the true author of the text has a nice anarchic ring to it, but it does not correspond to the experiences of the common or the scholarly reader.

These admonitory passages are characteristic. Driven by a stern common sense, and brimming over with impatience for sentimentality, self-indulgence, and utopian impulses, they trumpet messages or morals that reverberate throughout Shklar's essays. Do not take for granted the solid achievements of Enlightenment thought, she instructs, or the contribu-

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tion to human dignity that comes from a state that is large and impersonal enough to protect the freedom of the individual. Do not expect salvation from modern democracy. Do not be deluded into thinking that salvation was achieved by ancient democracy. Do not seek in sophisticated theory an excuse to avoid the rigors of responsible textual analysis and painstaking historical scholarship.

Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that Shklar's essays are just negative or critical. Indeed, they are unified by a positive contribution of lasting significance: her interpretation of the liberal tradition, which is her own display of the liberal spirit at work. From the very beginning of her career, Shklar was an outspoken champion of a self-assured, tough-minded, and austere liberalism.

The roots of what she characterized in *Legalism* as her "barebones liberalism" went back to the formative experiences of her European youth. Consistent with her insistence on the importance of the study of history to the understanding of political thought, but breaking discreetly with her practice of keeping her private life private, Shklar herself briefly indicated, in "A Life of Learning," a riveting autobiographical essay published in 1989, the impact of her own history on her ideas about the world:

> I am a bookworm. Since the age of eleven I have read and read, and enjoyed almost every moment of it.... One day I picked up the first volume of Shakespeare in the Schlegel-Tieck translation. The first play was *Titus Andronicus*, and I read it all. To this day I can still feel the fear and horror it inspired. I was so afraid and confused that I could not even bring myself to tell anyone what was bothering me. Finally I managed to spill it out to my oldest sister. As soon as I told her, I, of course, felt infinitely relieved, especially as she assured me that these things did not really happen. The trouble was that both she and I knew that far worse was going on all around us. By 1939 I already understood that books, even scary ones, would be my best refuge from a world that was far more terrible than anything they might reveal. And that is how I became a bookworm. It was also the end of my childhood.

Judith Shklar's liberalism never ceased to revolve around the fearful knowledge of the fragility of moral and political life, and of the terrifying crimes that, in the name of great causes and grand ideas, states can perpetrate against individuals. She saw the protection of the physical security of citizens, especially from the arbitrary use of state power, as the primary goal of liberal politics. The rise of Nazism out of the disarray of liberal Weimar was never far from her mind, and so she did not waver in her belief that the fundamental threat to liberal democracy comes from illiberal ideologies and antidemocratic forces.

Shklar offers the most authoritative account of the essentials of her "liberalism of fear" in an essay of that name, which was written in 1989. (Hoffmann appropriately places at it the head of *Political Thought and Political Thinkers.*) "The original and only defensible meaning of liberalism," Shklar proclaims, is that "every adult should be able to make as many effective decisions without fear or favor about as many aspects of her or his life as is compatible with the like freedom of every other adult." Unlike the Lockean liberalism of natural rights and the Millian liberalism of self-development, Shklar's liberalism of fear is a strictly political liberalism. It does not depend on metaphysical notions or a comprehensive moral theory. It practices toleration and encourages pluralism, deriving support for both from a skeptical frame of mind.

Shklar's liberalism offers no greatest good, but it insists that cruelty, and the fear that cruelty inspires, is the greatest evil. It regards government and its agents as the greatest perpetrators of cruelty, and it pays special attention to the poor and the weak since they are the most likely to suffer. It requires not weak government but limited government, government that is strong enough to devise and to execute "public policies and decisions made in conformity to requirements of publicity, deliberation and fair procedures." It recognizes that citizens must exercise virtues such as self-restraint, respect for the claims of others, self-reliance, and moral courage, but it declares that "it is not the task of liberal politics to foster them simply as models of human perfection." It rejects the idea of rights as natural or fundamental, but it employs them "as just those licenses and empowerments that citizens must have in order to preserve their freedom and to protect themselves against abuse." It is wedded to representative democracy, the ideal of political equality, the institution of an independent judiciary, and a pluralism of political groups and interests.

For even a cursory understanding of Shklar's liberalism, two other essentials of her thinking must be appreciated. The first is Shklar's love of Rousseau. This love might seem puzzling: as a critic of the Enlightenment and bourgeois civilization, as an accuser of the arts and sciences for corrupting men and morals, as a proponent of ancient virtue and a modern republicanism that proclaims that individuals must be "forced to be free," Rousseau and his way of thinking seem in every way the antithesis of Shklar's no-nonsense liberalism. Yet her essay "Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Equality" explains the debt beneath the difference. Among the great critics of liberal modernity, Rousseau was dear to Shklar's heart because he attacked modern society on the basis of a premise he shared with liberalism, the premise of the natural freedom and equality of all human beings.

Rousseau's thought presents, in Shklar's view, "a veritable encyclopedia of egalitarian ideas.... He did not invent the secular idea of equality, but he was its most complete and eloquent defender." Viewing political life "from the vantage point of the wretched," Rousseau teaches that artificial inequality created by custom and law is the source in modern society of unhappiness, vice, and injustice. And Shklar also took another sobering lesson from Rousseau. Since the achievement of equality was dependent on a kind of education that could not be provided to every citizen, "the true principles of political right" could not function as a blueprint for remaking society. They must serve, rather, as a standard for understanding the limits of politics.

The other essential of Shklar's thinking is her enthusiasm for American political thought. She came to the subject relatively late in her career, but she increasingly gave it pride of place in her work. In the title essay of *Redeeming American Political Thought*, Shklar took issue with the idea, closely associated with Louis Hartz, that a rights-based liberalism defined American politics and political thought from the founding era down to the present. Shklar thought this interpretation wrong and dangerous. It was wrong because it obscured the illiberal and antidemocratic elements that have assaulted and often overcome the liberal impulse in America. And it was dangerous because it lulled liberals into complacency when their business was unfinished, and supplied liberalism's critics with the canard that in America liberalism was a hegemonic and unmovable ideology.

In Shklar's account, American political theory from Paine to Madison, Hamilton, Jefferson, and John Adams, through Hawthorne, Emerson, and Henry Adams, represented a "profound meditation upon our political experiences and our peculiar and often tragically flawed institutions." Despite her frequent polemics against communitarian appeals to shared values, Shklar comes close to viewing American politi-

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cal thought as our precious inheritance, whose core principles, rightly understood, ought to be constitutive of American citizenship.

In the years since her death, a consensus has emerged about the character of Shklar's achievement. The virtues that lie at the heart of Shklar's liberalism of fear are a rigorous skepticism, a far-reaching analysis of the character that liberalism requires, and an acute appreciation of the illiberal ideas and anti-democratic forces that perennially threaten liberal democracy. In truth, though, the consensus about the virtues of Shklar's thinking about politics fails to take note of its vices, and so overlooks the illusions licensed by her liberalism.

The first illusion is that liberalism can dispense with, or need not bother itself about, first principles and theoretical foundations. This illusion springs from Shklar's skepticism. But alas, her skepticism has a dogmatic root. She never doubts, or subjects to critical scrutiny, liberalism's fundamental premise, which is the natural freedom and equality of all. Nor does she investigate sympathetically (or even consider seriously) the claims of religion or the conservative critics of liberal modernity. Her liberalism of fear is directed by an unyielding moral impulse—the ambition to respect the dignity of the individual—which she surreptitiously exempts from skeptical examination.

For the purpose of political debate, this exemption is admirable and right: our politics should not contest the question whether human beings are essentially equal. It must busy itself, rather, with the manner in which this fundamental equality receives expression in law and public policy. For the purpose of clear thinking, however, Shklar's casting of her liberal moralism as grounded in skepticism is a confusion. It has had unfortunate consequences, extending in some cases beyond the realm of ideas, for it has misled her many followers into believing that toleration and pluralism stem from skepticism, when they derive their fundamental support from the principle of the dignity of the individual. And it has helped to convince a generation of scholars that the rejection of all certitudes and all absolutes justifies the easy and absolute rejection of the wisdom embodied in tradition, the claims of faith, and the very idea of a moral standard that is the discovery of reason and not the invention of will or the artifact of imagination.

The second illusion fostered by Shklar's liberalism is that virtue will always more or less take care of itself. This illusion stems from questions about

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What are the facts?

The only democratic country in the Middle East. Israel is the only genuinely democratic state in the Middle East. It is committed to freedom and equality, and the rule of law. It embodies the fundamental values that are in tune with those of America and that America has traditionally supported.

Israel's military and political importance in the Middle East and its strategic position stabilize the entire area, including the oil fields of the Persian Gulf. During the Cold War, it was America's indispensable rampart against the inroads and expansionist ambitions of the Soviet Union. It is now a western bulwark against the aggressive intents of Iran, Iraq, and other bellicose nations that threaten the interests of the United States. It is a most reliable partner in the promotion of Western strategic interests and in the stabilization of the Middle East. 25% to 30% of its budget goes for defense, compared to 7% in the U.S. and less than 1% in Japan. Israel has one of the best armies in the world. Its navy and air force are the major deterrent forces in the eastern Mediterranean.

Israel effectively secures NATO's southeastern flank, without having a single American soldier stationed in its territory. Still, the superb military installations, the air and sea lift capabilities, the equipment and food storage capacity, and the trained manpower to maintain and repair sophisticated U.S. equipment are instantly at hand in Israel. It is the only country in the area that makes itself available to the United States, in any contingency.

Only fraction of aid stays in Israel. There is no other country in the Middle East except Israel that can be considered to have a stable government or populace friendly to the United States. There is much danger that any military aid to Arab countries, and military equipment given or sold to them, will suffer the same fate as the untold billions of dollars and priceless military secrets that were lost to our enemies in the debacle of Iran. Is Saudi Arabia more stable? Egypt? Jordan? Kuwait? Judge for yourself!

> "American aid to Israel is a two-way street. Aid to Israel is America's greatest defense bargain."

Only a fraction of the aid given stays in Israel. By far the largest share remains with American defense contractors. Peter McPherson, former administrator of the Agency for International Development, estimated that every billion dollars of aid to Israel creates 60,000 to 70,000 jobs in the United States.

Compared to the $1.8 billion yearly military aid to Israel, the U.S. contributes more than $130 billion(!) every year to the defense of Europe and more than $30 billion to the defense of Japan, Korea, and the Far East. Over 300,000 U.S. troops are stationed with NATO and over 30,000 U.S. troops in the Far East. In contrast, not one single U.S. soldier needs to be stationed and put at risk in Israel. U.S. military analysts estimate that the U.S. would have to spend the equivalent of $150 billion a year in the Middle East to maintain a force equivalent to Israel's.

There are many other benefits that the U.S. military derives from Israel. Israel is the only country that has gained battlefield experience with U.S. weapons. This experience is immediately conveyed to the U.S. Enormous quantities of captured Soviet weapons and defense systems were turned over to the U.S. military for analysis. Israel, in the light of its experience, continually modifies U.S. weapons systems. For instance, Israeli scientists have made over 200 improvements in the F-15 alone and similar improvements, mostly in avionics, in later-generation planes. It would be more in line with reality if military aid to Israel were classified as part of the defense budget, rather than as "aid". Israel is truly America's unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Middle East. Former President Reagan put it well: "The fall of Iran has increased Israel's value as perhaps the only remaining strategic asset in the region on which the United States can fully rely." American aid to Israel is a two-way street. Aid to Israel is America's greatest defense bargain.

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virtue that her own account of character tends to hush-up and cover over. It is bracing to hear Shklar reproach the conservative moralists who argue that liberalism licenses a kind of sluggish, self-centered, do-as-you-please individualism. Yet it is not enough to assert with pride, as Shklar does in *Ordinary Vices*, that toleration "demands an enormous degree of self-control" and that "liberalism is, in fact, extremely difficult and constraining, far too much so for those who cannot endure contradiction, complexity, diversity, and the risks of freedom." Nor is it adequate confidently to assure the reader, as she does in "The Liberalism of Fear," that liberalism is perfectly well-endowed with the conceptual resources that permit it to identify the virtues on which self-government depends (even though it denies government the authority to foster those virtues).

For this is the really pressing question, which is never squarely addressed in Shklar's work: where will such a strenuous liberal self-discipline originate? The liberal tradition has offered a variety of answers: the family, religion, commerce, voluntary association, public education. Yet these institutions have all undergone substantial changes since the heyday of classical liberalism, and in some cases they have been weakened by the very actualization of liberal principles. By fostering the illusion that liberalism need not exercise itself about the ground and the cultivation of virtue, Shklar obscures the tension between the virtue that liberalism requires and the means at its disposal to summon it and to sustain it.

The third illusion nourished by the liberalism of fear is that the dangers to liberal democracy in America come exclusively from illiberal ideas and antidemocratic forces. This mistake grows out of the judgment that whatever the internal weaknesses of liberal democracy, they are less urgent than, and should not be allowed to distract from, the more urgent external threats. Or, less defensibly, that there can only be one serious threat to liberal democracy, and it is the threat that is posed by liberalism's enemies.

Dennis F. Thompson's foreword to *Redeeming American Political Thought* illustrates how easy it is to slide from the more defensible view to the less defensible one. One finds there a hearty endorsement of Shklar's questionable argument that Tocqueville's criticism of the forces in democracy that weaken the love of liberty is invalid for America, since Tocqueville was writing for fellow Frenchmen. (And so he was, except that he explained that it was his aim to disclose to them the universal properties of the democratic condition.) Indeed, Thompson seeks to drive the wedge between Shklar and Tocqueville still deeper: "Shklar could have faulted Tocqueville, more explicitly than she did, for defining the problem the way he did. Her view of equality in America is in a fundamental respect the opposite of his. For him, the problem is social equality, because it threatens political liberty. For her, the problem is social *in*equality, because it endangers political equality."

Surely this way of thinking, this tendency to distinguish two threats to liberal democracy and insist that only one is valid and true, weakens liberalism. It weakens liberalism by prohibiting it from understanding its own weaknesses. It leaves liberalism smug and tidy. But this prohibition contravenes two essential liberal lessons taught by Mill in *On Liberty*. The first lesson, which is also a Socratic lesson, is that, in contrast to mathematics "where there is nothing at all to be said on the wrong side of the question," in moral and political matters there is always something to be said on the other sides of the issue. And the second lesson pertains to the fundamental

Pool Hall

By the time I was 28, the evening shift
at Booche's seemed like all I had ever known,
especially after the day crowd drifted home

and left me watching the shallow cast of sunlight
inching down the white formica bartop—
shoals of cigarette smoke in back, and the clack

of eightball. As for the regulars who held on,
clinging to some shore of their creation:
better to keep quiet, better to let them cling,

the purgatorial fires of Happy Hour
suffusing one side of their faces . . . It was
easy to see there was no turning back,

oblivion blooming in the mirror's waters . . .
Staring out at the rows of glarestruck storefronts—
powerlines and smokestacks washed in gold—

I thought it was perfect. I thought I'd be there forever,
tending that lull, waiting on the drowned . . .
For I knew every cocktail recipe,

the secret physics of bankshots, and could read
the tension smoldering through the slag of dusk,
the ashen ache of exposed riverbanks

that set our teeth on edge. Night after night
I'd pour one-handed, one eye on the street—
as cloudreefs burned incarnadine through gaps

in the stunned skyline. Sometimes, no one spoke
for hours—their bodies rocking a little, fixed
on glints and knots of light in the stacked glassware—

rapture flooding through soldered nerves . . . They'd slide
their empties towards me, each soul boarded up
but conscious of these seconds ticking, freeways

droning just beyond the outskirts of
this view—these blank marquees and sidewalk trees,
this smoky blush of plate-glass—as each green

and swallow-crossed dusk deepened, and slipped away.

Michael White

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requirements of public debate, and the variety of principles that ought to inform the construction of political institutions in a liberal democracy:

> Unless opinions favorable to democracy and to aristocracy, to property and to equality, to cooperation and to competition, to luxury and to abstinence, to sociality and to individuality, to liberty and to discipline, and all the other standing antagonisms of practical life, are expressed with equal freedom, and enforced and defended with equal talent and energy, there is no chance of both elements obtaining their due.

What Shklar ought to have allowed, in the finest liberal spirit, is that democracy is endangered not only by extremes of social inequality, but also by the democratic tendency to take equality to an extreme and, at the expense of liberty, to demand that the state equalize all the aspects of life. Her excellent eye for illiberal dispositions needs to be supplemented with an account of the vices that the liberal celebration of individual choice regularly seems to engender. For the prideful aversion to authority (including the authority of reason), the envy of excellence, the apathy of self-absorbed individualism, the slavish submission to self-interest narrowly understood—in sum, all the vices of liberal democracy—interfere with the responsible exercise of individual rights, and hinder the discharge of the duties of democratic citizenship.

Why did Shklar, who knew as well as anyone that venality, corruption, and cruelty are never far from the surface in democratic politics, fail to examine the sources of self-indulgence and viciousness that arise out of the spirit of liberal democracy itself? Why did she exploit skepticism to shelter liberal certitudes? Perhaps, as she herself suggests, the answer has to do with the peculiar kind of refugee she was:

> As I look at myself I see that I have often been moved to oppose theories that did not only seem wrong to me, but also excessively fashionable. I do not simply reject out of hand the prevailing notions and doctrines, but complacency, metaphysical comforts, and the protection of either sheltered despair or of cozy optimism drive me into intellectual action. I do not want to settle down into one of the available conventions. Perhaps this reflects the peculiarity of the kind of refugee I was.

Following Shklar's lead, we may wonder whether the experience that helps to account for the virtues of her political theory also helps to account for its vices. For almost four decades, the refugee from European reaction argued that liberalism was chiefly threatened by various romantic, authoritarian, and anti-individualist reactions against the Enlightenment; and insisted that the main threat to democracy in America comes from religion, from aristocratic residues from our past, and from entrenched patterns of prejudice and exclusion.

It would go too far to say that the "liberalism of fear" was a solution to a problem that no longer existed. For the threats to liberal democracy that Shklar identified and feared—especially grinding poverty and severe social inequality—are genuine and persistent. But surely they are not all that can bring liberalism down. And so it must be said, a little ruefully, that in the long and brilliant fight that Shklar waged against illiberal ideas and antidemocratic forces, she gave aid and comfort to a democratic dogmatism and a liberal intolerance that are also genuine and persistent threats to the well-being of liberal democracy.

She was an unforgettable teacher and a remarkable political theorist. Her great achievement was to show several generations of students, many of whom had been educated to believe that liberalism was a one-dimensional, dreary, and dispensable idea, that liberalism names a many-sided and multilayered tradition worthy of study and defense and love. She was right; but it is tougher love that liberalism needs today, a more candid and more exigent love. We must learn to learn not only from liberalism's heroes, but also from its critics and its rivals. It is not the only way to honor Judith Shklar, but it is the liberal way.

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The Trouble With Lively

BY ADAM KIRSCH

Green Sees Things in Waves by August Kleinzahler

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 80 pp., $22)

Since Wordsworth, lyric poetry has been the attempt to force the mind's half-tones and shadows out into the bright light of art. The motions of thought and feeling, fleeting and almost insignificant in themselves, are brought to a stand in the publicity of form and fixity; and it is in the tension of these opposing forces that the strange delicacy of the best modern poetry is born. Wordsworth's unreasonable panic and dread in his poems on Lucy; Keats's voluptuousness of ease in the Odes; Eliot's adolescent nighttime yearnings in his early "Preludes" and in "Prufrock"—all describe shades of feeling that no earlier poetry had attempted to capture. Like the blind man with exceptionally fine hearing, modern verse has ceded its more impressive functions—narrative and drama—to other genres, and has been compensated with an acute ability to consider consciousness.

But this accession of power has led poets, especially in the last fifty years, to believe they can make another, more costly abdication. As poetry has looked toward the shadows, it has too often forgotten that it stands in the light, and that nothing can have any value as art that is not rigorously retrieved and patterned, and thereby brought back into the world. This cannot be accomplished by the techniques of psychology: free-association, internal monologue, interior symbol, the recording of dreams. Writing based on these techniques remains just psychology, unless the raw material of inwardness is mastered and shaped by the sterner techniques of art: allusion, meter, and rhyme. It is a truism that nobody's dreams are interesting to a stranger; but poems must be interesting to strangers. If poetry is to be more than just a hobby of self-expression, it must move beyond psychology, into the open region of art.

August Kleinzahler's poetry teeters on the edge of this divide. The distinguishing marks of his work, the things for which he has been praised, are amply in evidence in *Green Sees Things in Waves*, which is his fifth book. Here again are the jaunty demotic diction, the urban grit, the delight in camp and pastiche, the moments of sentimental seriousness. His voice is distinct and even new, though it has clear affinities with the surreal whimsy of Ashbery and the manic stream-of-consciousness of the Beats. (Most of the poems take place in New

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York and San Francisco, neatly symbolizing the two pedigrees.) In order to encompass these subjects and these feelings, Kleinzahler's verse has been kept deliberately loose, so that it can be playful or earnest as it pleases, without being caught up on the stilts of poetic diction.

The range of moods and approaches in this book is striking. There is gentle surrealism:

> On the tea-green comforter with Babette
> the pet mouse
> stuffed and at sea on its expanse
> a breeze in the curtains
> how one then begins to float
> naked but for fur and as God would have
> so many towns
> unseen at first then bend after bend
> revealed....

There is urban realism:

> The ragged sleepers tremble under
> blankets
> of newsprint, cough, turn over, curl as far
>
> into themselves as they can, careening
> through
> the switchbacks of dreams....

There is close observation of nature:

> The crow's raw hectoring cry
> scoops clean an oval divot
> of sky, its fading echo
> among the oaks and poplars swallowed....

And there is tender reminiscence:

> Lilac and dogwood
> Flowering pear blossoms, mingling
> Drifting in gutters
> How many years
> For how many years
> A stranger to my own heart

What all of these modes have in common, however, are their refusals. Kleinzahler refuses not only rhyme and meter, but rhythm itself; the only rhythms here, and those not always, are those of the speaking voice. Such refusals have been justified time and again in the last fifty years in the name of fidelity—to the voice, to ordinary speech, to life; and Kleinzahler's poetry in particular has been praised for its liveliness. But what *Green Sees Things in Waves* demonstrates very clearly is that this ideal of fidelity, to the rhythms of actual speech and to the waywardness of actual thought, is not enough to make poetry.

Kleinzahler is devoted to liveliness, but what is most striking throughout the book is limpness, the disappointment of accuracy unheightened by artifice. Take, for instance, the title poem. "Green Sees Things in Waves": the title itself sounds like an Ashberyan parody of diction, lightly suggesting a meaning without really committing to one. But the poem itself turns out to be not about the color green as idea or symbol, but about an actual person named Green:

> Green first thing each day sees waves—
> the chair, armoire, overhead fixtures,
> you name it,
> waves—which, you might say, things
> really are,
> but Green just lies there awhile breathing
> long slow breaths, in and out, through
> his mouth
> like he was maybe seasick...
>
> ... seems our boy ate quite a pile of acid
> one time,
> clinical, wow, enough juice for half
> a block—
> *go, go, go, little Greenie*—blew the wiring out
> from behind his headlights and now,
> no matter what,
> can't find the knob to turn off the show.

Expecting linguistic parody, we get demotic comedy, a kind of breezy bathos. Several of Kleinzahler's strengths can be gleaned here: the cartooning of slang ("go, go, go, little Greenie"); the interest in conventionally unpoetic experience (an acid trip); the jaunty vernacular ("wow," "like he was maybe"). But what is missing is equally significant. Look at the lines. Laid out on the page, they have the familiar shape of iambic pentameter. Reading them, however, we are continually wrongfooted by the absence of meter, or even of the looser regularity of prose. The lines move jerkily and slightly too fast. They "work" only when spoken in the strained, pattering rhythms of hipster talk.

This failure is not just a failure of technique. Kleinzahler's subject matter demands precisely this kind of treatment—irregular, unpatterned—because it is accidental, unrepeatable, anecdotal. A man who wakes up hallucinating because of a bad LSD experience: such a subject is unpoetic in the deepest sense—not because it is "low" or unimportant, but because it remains trapped in singularity. Green is true only in the sense that an anecdote can be true: he is only a fact. And the patternlessness of the writing—it bears no relation to any established meter, and does not create a new rhythm for itself—perfectly complements the mere factuality of the subject. (We see here also, I suspect, the baneful effect of the poetry reading upon the writing of poetry: too many contemporary poems are scores for performance, with pauses and emphases gross enough to come over well in a reading, but too gross to please when read in solitude.)

Seen in this light, some of Kleinzahler's most praised strengths—his curiosity, his love of novelty, his catholicity of taste—come to look like symptoms of weakness. The poems in *Green Sees Things in Waves* often search far afield for their subjects. In "Uttar Pradesh," Kleinzahler imagines a famous painter flying over India; in "Snow in North Jersey," he describes that region's poverty and unloveliness; in "Someone Named Gutierrez: A Dream, A Western," he spins out a camp genre-piece. Incidents are multiplied, in a way that seems authentically American, and has even earned him comparisons to Whitman.

The modes of language are multiplied, as well, and liveliness can spill over into outright verbal spasm, as in "52 Pick-up":

Luminoso e dolce	Chamfer
Suzerainty	Amber, civet and musk cods
Impetigo	Wahoo McDaniel

And so forth. This scavenging for the outré looks like plenitude, but it conceals poverty: it relies on the stimulus of things happening, but it does not make what happens stimulating. "52 Pick-up," in particular, represents a kind of bankruptcy, a despair of meaning and form, and it suggests an equivalent bankruptcy in the reading public: only a reader thoroughly lacking in confidence would submit to this romp through the dictionary.

Many of the poems in *Green Sees Things in Waves* are trapped in anecdote. This can be true even when Kleinzahler is not actually unfolding a story. Consider a section of the snapshot-collage of "Toys":

> The janitor washing the blackboard
> in Mrs. Turnaud's class
>
> February night not too far
> from the border with Vermont
>
> snowless, and still a little stoned
>
> thinks he caught a patch
> of aurora borealis out the window
>
> or maybe just a headlight off a cloud

This is a story boiled down to an instant of time: we must reconstruct, even if only provisionally, the identity of the janitor and Mrs. Turnaud, the atmosphere of a town "not too far from the border with Vermont." By denying us this background, Kleinzahler wants us to concentrate on the magical momentariness of the janitor's vision. But he has not accomplished such a distillation: the vision is being reported to us from outside, not reproduced in the manner of poetry. We can only try to analogize it to something in our own experience. The poem is a token, to which we are required to ascribe the value; it is not,

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as a poem should be, a coin of independent worth.

This failure becomes most explicit when Kleinzahler writes the sort of poem that we traditionally think of as lyric: one in which an "I" ruminates in a moment of time and expresses a mood. For all his demotic and avant-garde jauntiness, Kleinzahler remains attracted to a very sentimental type of ruminative poem. Indeed, in contemporary American poetry, surface tumult and actual sentiment, lunacy and ease, almost always go together. (James Tate and Thomas Lux are good examples.) It is only with the support of form that an interesting deformation of the sensibility can be achieved. But it is when Kleinzahler adopts the "I," the oldest and most effective universalizing device, that the impoverishing specificity of his poem becomes most painfully acute.

Take, for instance, the first stanza of "Gray Light in May":

> The soft gray light between rains
> This enveloping light
> Under a canopy of green
> Oak chestnut maple
> Last night the moon, orange and full
> Over Manhattan's West Side
> Edgewater below so sleepy
> The neighborhood asleep
> My family asleep
> Coming back here how many years now
> And the ride in from Newark
> Manhattan looming over the meadows
> *The beauties of travel are due to*
> *The strange hours we keep to see them*
> This soft windless air
> Away now nearly thirty years
> You can smell the tidal flats below
> Passenger jets silent overhead
> In and out of Kennedy, La Guardia
> As if gliding across the night
> My heart abrim
> A glass of wine, spilling over
> The air like wine
> I am a stranger to myself

The scene is clearly set. The poet has returned home to New Jersey late at night, and the excitement of travel has kept him up thinking, until he achieves a kind of heart-expanding epiphany of sensation. This is perfect material for a poem: the extraordinary bursting forth from the ordinary is perhaps the standard lyric situation of the last two hundred years. And the last four lines quoted refer to a significant poetic feeling.

But the poem does not come to life; it remains a series of notes, a mental transcript. It is not, as Larkin defined the poem, a verbal device for reproducing a feeling in the reader. It is not just all the local references—the West Side, Newark, Kennedy, La Guardia—that anchor the poem to the site of the poet's experience. It is also the form of the poem, the conception: Kleinzahler follows the meandering of his actual thoughts and then leaps, in those last four lines, into the important feeling. The problem is that the energy which enables such a leap does not lie in the preceding thoughts. Instead it hides behind them, and manifests itself more as mood and rhythm than as a set of propositions.

But Kleinzahler declines rhythm, rhyme, and pattern, those tried and true incantations, in favor of reportage. And so we accept that he had this experience, but we hear of it with a cold reticence, the coldness with which we each naturally greet the important experiences and dreams of others. To overcome that natural hesitancy is the task of poetry, and Kleinzahler does not make the effort to do so.

The failure may be exposed by comparison with a poem that is about a similar mood, Eliot's "Preludes." For all the difference in scenery and even attitude, the third section of Eliot's poem follows the same arc as Kleinzahler's poem: the sudden uplifting out of the prosaic into the barely-comprehended sublime. See how Eliot accomplishes this rising:

> You tossed a blanket from the bed,
> You lay upon your back, and waited;
> You dozed, and watched the night
> revealing
> The thousand sordid images
> Of which your soul was constituted;
> They flickered against the ceiling.
> And when all the world came back
> And the light crept up between the shutters
> And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,
> You had such a vision of the street
> As the street hardly understands;
> Sitting along the bed's edge, where
> You curled the papers from your hair,
> Or clasped the yellow soles of feet
> In the palms of both soiled hands.

Here we have no details of place, no proper names, no specific references to the poet's situation, surroundings, or history; but we have rhythm and rhyme, which in their *vers-libre* irregularity heighten the jags and drops of the emotion. Eliot's "vision of the street" and Kleinzahler's "my heart abrim" are at least of the same genus. But because the former's poem is significantly patterned, it is actually more real than the latter's document of feeling.

Kleinzahler's poetry is emblematic of a peril facing poetry today. Over the last two hundred years in English literature, several influences have combined to shrink our idea of what a poem can do to an unambitious minimum. From Wordsworth, we have the idea that poetry should be inward and psychological; from Shelley, through Emerson and others, we have the idea that the sensitive-souled reader is himself a poet, or at least equivalent to one; from Joyce, we have the idea that the detritus of modern life can be made psychologically meaningful. And all of these ideas have been right, because they have all produced great art.

Yet everyone has inwardness and psychology; everyone can feel himself a sensitive soul; everyone has access to the stuff of modern life. And so we have a poetry that bends exceedingly deeply to the ordinary, in the hope that when it rises it will be gazing at the universal. But even those artists who have most extolled the ordinary have not forgotten that it is only a starting point for art. Kleinzahler's poetry too often does forget this, and puts forth the ordinary raw and untransformed. Liveliness is not enough to make poetry live. •

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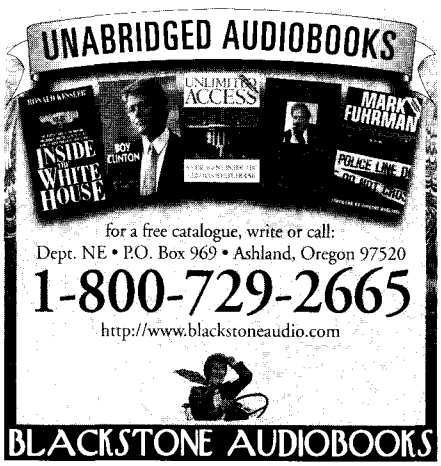

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Li'l helpers

I AM WRITING A LETTER, WHICH, AS it happens, is one of the few tasks in life for which I feel entirely equipped. My computer, though, has its doubts. Just after I have typed the address and salutation, a little box pops into view in the upper left-hand corner of my screen. "It looks like you're writing a letter," the box says. "Would you like help?" Below this box, seconding its perky little promptings, is a dancing paper clip. The paper clip exhibits Tourette-like tics. It wriggles and simpers and winks and delivers itself of raffish little sidelong glances while I am trying to write. It rears back in mock horror when I commit what it takes to be a grammatical error. Did Jessica Rabbit ever lie down with the Planters Peanut? If so, this is their progeny. And, thanks to Microsoft Word 97, it lives in my computer, taunting me like one of those houseguests who hover at your elbow with helpful advice about how to empty the litter box or load the dishwasher. Once, I took the paper clip up on its offer and learned the following: "Dear Joe" is an example of an "informal" salutation; "Dear Mr. Jones" is an example of a formal one. The sender of a letter is "usually yourself."

THE PAPER CLIP "HELPS" WITH other writing tasks, too, and so does the whole tyrannically solicitous program. It's a new system for TNR, which until about two months ago operated on a program called XyWrite and on computers so outdated that, when our editor tried to sell them cheap to technology-poor Third World countries, he was politely refused. Basically we're happy with the new system and grateful to be modernized and all that, except that, unlike the old primitive system, the slick new one goes down about three times a week. Each of us has e-mail now, but, since the system goes down, as I say, about three times a week, we send messages and then can't read the replies for about a week, which somewhat defeats the purpose of e-mail. We have another new feature, too, whose impact on the prose style here has yet to be determined. It is one of those grammar-correcting devices which puts little green squiggles under sentences it deems to be syntactically suspect. As far as I can tell, this means long sentences or sentences with semicolons. (The computer's tastes are Hemingwayesque). Now I realize that you can deactivate the squiggles, just as you can deactivate the paper clip. What you cannot do, however, is ignore them. A couple of my colleagues—fine writers, both of them—have become obsessed with placating the grammar feature. They tinker with their sentences until the squiggle disappears and then, in a strange way, they are happy. They are not sure whether their sentences are any better. Another colleague has a last name that is a few letters off from the name of a common vegetable. Inexplicably, about a week ago, her computer began "correcting" the spelling of her last name every time she typed it. For a second her actual name appears on the screen. Then it vanishes, like letters erased from one of those Magna Doodle toys, and the name of the vegetable takes its place.

COMPUTER LANguage is so odd. When it comes to explaining the most fundamental, low-tech tasks, it sounds condescending, oversolicitous, dumb as toast, as though the people who wrote the software assumed that the people who use it haven't a clue how to do what is probably their job—how, say, to compose a letter. Yet when it comes to explaining something the average computer user is not at all likely to understand—say, why a program repeatedly malfunctions—the computer spews gobbledygook. "Cannot access NR2.Sys," it told me the other day when I did what I have done to it every previous morning of its life. Or: "The drive or network connection that the Shortcut 'GroupWise5.link' refers to is unavailable." Oh, it is, is it? Where's little Mr. Scampering Paper Clip now?

IN THE RHETORIC OF CUSTOMER service, as in the rhetoric of computer software, there is a certain kind of mendacious politesse that is always the harbinger of maltreatment. One signal phrase of this kind is "To better serve you...." This, I have noticed, is frequently the preamble to an explanation of why you will henceforth be required to pay a fee for some service you previously had for free, such as banking. The same unctuous phrase also does duty as a justification for downsizing, for vastly inconvenient remodeling ventures, and for the mothballing of entire businesses. For example, when a fast-food chain called Boston Market began closing outlets in the Washington area, it posted signs in the now drearily empty storefronts, declaring that "To better serve you, we have merged locations." When I see it in my neighborhood, this sign invariably, and perhaps unreasonably, annoys me. It helps to stop in at the dry cleaner's down the street, whose proprietors are forever coming up with sweetly failed attempts at sales slogans, such as the current example, carefully spelled out in big felt letters on the wall: "We imagine that we are in your clothes."

A YEAR OR SO AGO, I WROTE AN article about the proliferation of new businesses that take over portions of your domestic life and outsource them for you. Ever since then, friends have been sending me ads for similar companies, each more rarefied than the last. My favorite is an outfit in the Washington area, called Children's Concierge, which plans customized vacation itineraries for your out-of-town visitors with kids. I wonder how my sister and her two children, Gabriel and Grace, who are nine and seven, would have reacted had I presented them with one of these documents when they came to see us this spring. Gabriel and Grace are exceptionally bright kids; they like history and animals and science, and so we planned to go to most of the museums on the Mall. But what they remembered best about the visit, it turned out, were not the planned expeditions but the stuff that happened accidentally, in the in-between time. They liked making gravel cities in our driveway and being babysat one night by somebody new, who let them eat popsicles in the living room, and they liked going to the circus, which was their idea, on the last day. Every trip I remember from my own childhood is like that, too. I remember the novelty of fetching ice in paper buckets from the motel ice machine or the giddiness of jumping on motel beds with my cousins or the weirdness of swimming in overchlorinated pools that turned my hair a science-fictiony green. I remember, on a trip to New York when I was seven, running to the window of some midtown hotel late one night because I thought I heard hooves ringing on the pavement. There on the street below was a cop on horseback, something I'd never seen or heard of at home in Southern California, and both of them were splashed with silver moonlight. The man saw me and, like a policeman in a storybook, looked up and waved. Serendipity, unavailable from a concierge.

MARGARET TALBOT

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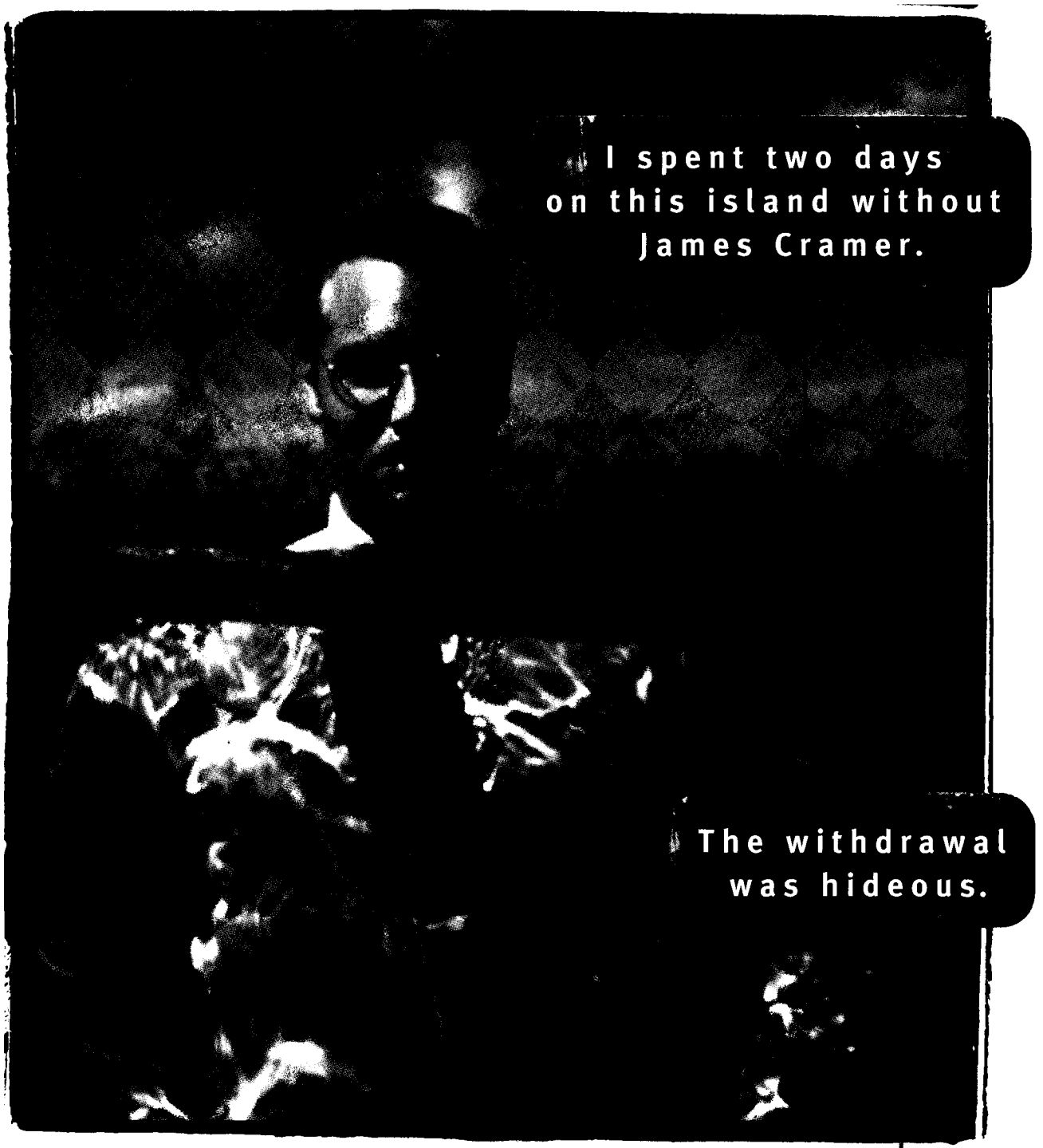

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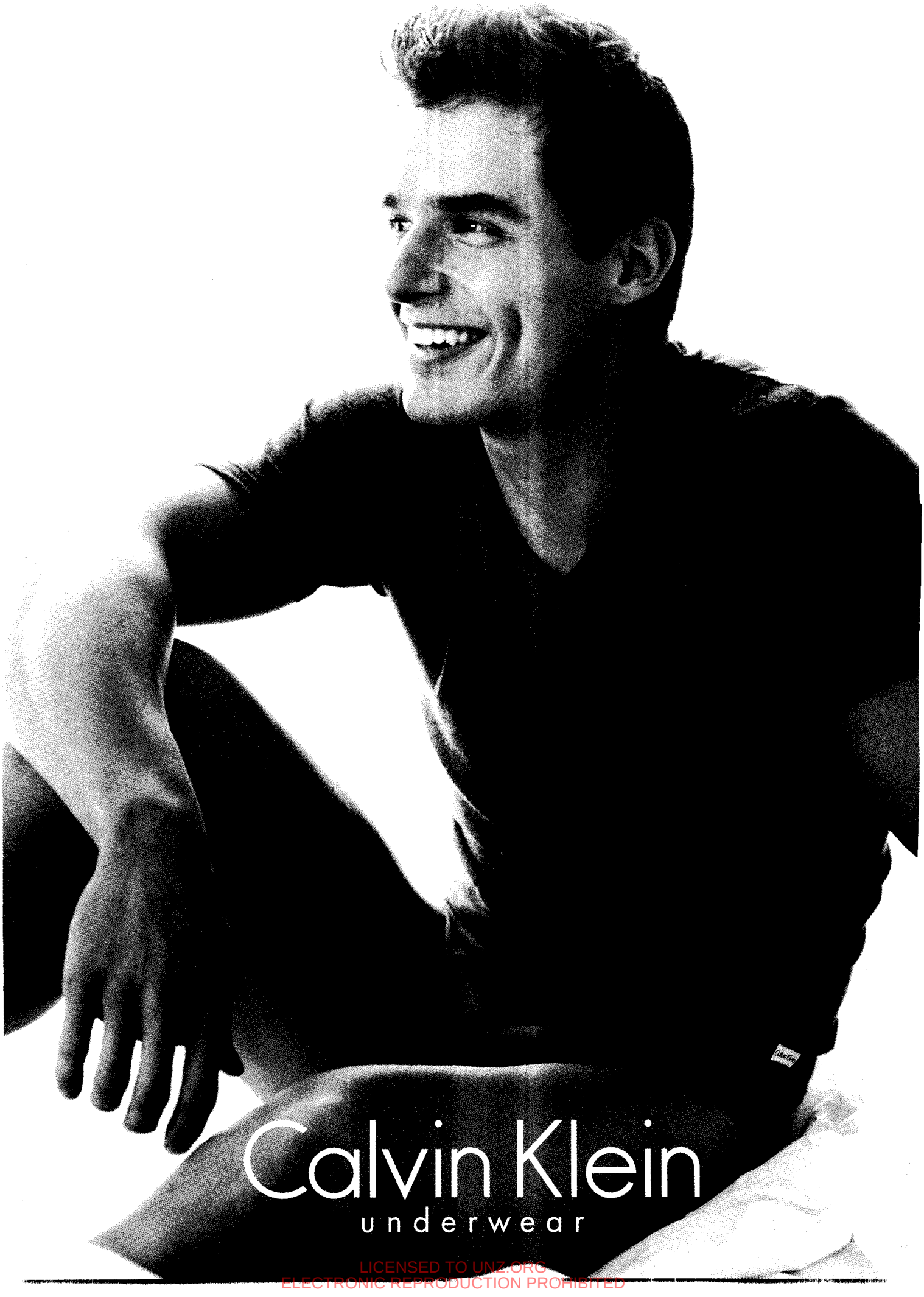

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